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*All in this Issue*

Frank Heller's
*Mystery Novel Complete*

Francis Brett Young's
*Powerful Tale of the Sea*

Honoré Willsie Morrow's
*Story of the Pioneer West*

Meade Minnegerode
Stacy Aumonier
W. Lee Dickson
Sam Carson
Arthur Mills
*and Others*

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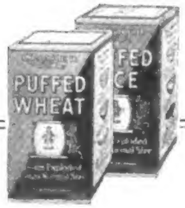

**Quaker**
**Puffed Rice**

# Everybody's

NUMBER FOUR OCTOBER, 1924 VOLUME FIFTY-ONE

*If It's in Everybody's It's a Good Story*

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"But you don't know me, sir."

"Ah, but I do, Lady. Thy fair face betrays thy maskéd eyes. Thou'rt none other than the charming Sally of my dreams!"

Raymond Thayer

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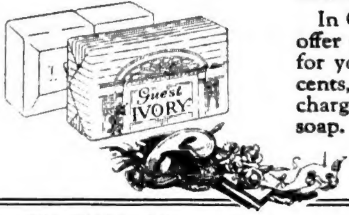

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*Advertising section continued in rear of book*

Everybody's

VOL. 51, NO. 4 OCTOBER, 1924 SEWELL HAGGARD, EDITOR

# The Sea Horses

*The Actions That Spring from Our True Desires, That Shape and Mold Our Lives—These Are the Elements Used in This Brilliant, Dramatic Story*

## By Francis Brett Young

Illustrations by Joseph A. Maturo

AT A collapsible teak table, beneath the glassy eye of the for'ard porthole, Glanvil sat with his pen suspended. His long legs were cramped sidewise by his narrow quarters; his hunched shoulders cast upon the paper before him a shadow over which his bony hand hung like the brown kite that hovers before it swoops. On the bulkhead in front of him a photograph suspended in an oval frame tilted deliberately and then poised, recovered, like a piece of metal swayed by invisible magnets. As it moved across the teak panels with a scratching sound above a steady rhythm of engines that passed for silence in Glanvil's mind, his eyes followed it, and the eyes of the portrait seemed to watch him as they moved. They were dark and deep on either side of a boldly modeled nose, and the face, which was that of a middle-aged woman, was only a softened version of his own, with lips that were thinner and set in a faintly critical smile. His eyes left the portrait and returned to the heading of his letter: "S.S. *Vega*, Near Naples, December 12." The fingers, which had seemed too uncouth for such a delicate matter, descended; he began to write once more in a firm, downright hand.

He wrote to his mother. No great significance attached itself to the act. He hoped to be home for Christmas. He told her of things he had bought in Colombo; of a portrait he had had a Japanese there make on silk from a snapshot of Elsie Tyrer.

Elsie Tyrer! His mind passed backward to the June day when he had left Brixham in Devon to join his ship. His mother had stood over him as he packed, anxious to lose no moment of his company. A breeze, warm, but so faint that the russet sails flapped and the trawlers smoked and lounged on board waiting for a chance to slip their moorings, troubled the muslin curtains of the front bedroom, and at the last moment he had secreted in his breast pocket the snapshot of Elsie that he had taken on a picnic. He had been half ashamed that his mother should see him do this. Why, he did not know; for all through the month that his owners allowed him, he and Elsie had been much together.

His mother had watched them; sometimes she had even seemed to encourage, and yet it had felt like a piece of bravado when he had given the snapshot to the Jap to copy. The roll of silk had come back to him within twelve hours, and on it he had seen the face he knew and the cheek that he had once kissed curiously Orientalized and refined. Later this mingling of likeness and unlikeness had become disturbing. Riding in a rickshaw through Malay Street, the Yoshiwara of Singapore, he had caught sight of a Japanese woman whose painted face seemed to reconcile the difference and sent him back to his ship shaken, burning with an indefinite desire. Since leaving Colombo he had never once looked at the portrait. The thing was unclean, and better left to lie in its cardboard tube. And now, almost against his will, it had thrust itself into his letter, an evil influence whose power could only be exorcised by the sight of its original. Ten days more!

It was better to marry than to burn, and better particularly for a sailor. His twenty years at sea had taught him that, if nothing else. Some of his contemporaries, boys who had served their apprenticeship with him, were married already. Only a few weeks ago he had met one of them, a fellow from Barnstaple named Northcote, who was now third officer on one of Holt's Blue Funnels. They had sat on the terrace of Raffles Hotel drinking tepid German beer, listening to the paddling of rickshaw boys' feet, watching the lizards that hunted on the loggia ceiling, while Northcote had expounded to him the incredible accuracy of compound multiplication and damned difficulty of making two ends meet on ten pounds a month and bonus.

"But it's worth it, George, old boy," he said, beginning to talk about a four-roomed house with a white flagstaff in front of it and green-painted windows from which one could see the light on Braunton Burrows and Lundy lifting cloudlike out of a gray-green sea. "I reckon I'll just get home to set some potatoes up at the back," he said. "Living as we do, every little helps, and my girl's as plucky as a lion."

THESE confidences had affected Glanvil deeply. He knew that if he wanted to there was no reason why he shouldn't plant potatoes for his mother at the back of the house on Berry Head. It seemed unreasonable that gardening should seem romantic in one case and not in another. When he had paid for the drinks and parted with Northcote he sat on, lonely in the warm night, reflecting that though success had made him the youngest master in his company and given him a salary four times as great as that which Northcote earned, he had as yet no home that he could call his own.

"With me," he thought, "it isn't any longer a question of means: I'm putting by money every month. It's cautiousness, shyness; it's just the way I happen to be made. And the old woman."

There rose in his mind the pale face of Mrs. Glanvil, so curiously like his own in its severity; on its lips he saw the guarded smile with which she had looked at him and Elsie Tyrer; at that moment, loving, he almost disliked her; her smile made him feel selfish, undutiful. To escape from himself he had hailed a rickshaw and gone bowling softly through a haze of Chinese smells toward Malay Street, which all rickshaw boys know to be the natural destination of sailors ashore, and there he had seen one painted face that still troubled him, and mocked him, and another, that of his own second officer, Cochran. From the bridge above him came a metallic staccato. Five bells. Voices in the alleyway. His steward, a Cantonese with a muddy, pockmarked face, filled the doorway.

"Dinner leady, sir."

"All right. I'm coming."

Glanvil entered the saloon, leaving his speculations behind him. The five bell strokes recalled him from his privacy to take his place in that mechanism of blood and nerves and steel which was the *Vega:* a speck of kindling light urged by the palpable heartbeats of her engines over the dusky surface of the Tyrrhenian. Of this complex organism Glanvil's brain was the controlling cell. In his own cabin he had been a fallible human being, the prey of fears, hopes and desires; at the head of the table in the saloon he became automatically the master of a ship at sea; a creature incapable of passions, push, dehumanized and inevitably lonely.

The fact that the men on either side of him, Cheadle, the chief engineer, and Hendry, the first officer, were older than himself had forced him to exaggerate the formality of his position; and the maintenance of this relation, which, in the early days of the voyage, had seemed artificial and awkward, had now become second nature to him. Apart from his delight and pride in his ship he had been happier as a chief officer. He spoke rarely, and more rarely smiled.

That night, tempted by the prospect of landing at Naples, letters from home, and sailing orders, the ship's company, their angles and asperities long since rubbed smooth by seafaring at close quarters, like pebbles on a thunderous beach, became individual and communicative.

The second officer, a small, tough Ulsterman with a broken nose, a low crop-haired forehead and a coarse red mouth, sat silent.

"What I look forward to," said Hendry, a ruddy, thick-set Scotsman who took life easily, "is the first dinner my missus gives me on shore. First-rate cook, she is." He turned to Glanvil politely. "It's five years since we got married, sir, and I don't suppose we've had six months together from first to last. You're not a married man, sir, so you don't know what that means."

"Cochran does, though," grunted the chief, "from what I saw of him on the Circular Quay at Sydney."

Cochran reddened but made no answer. Cheadle and he were enemies of long standing and he knew the virtues of silence.

The dull talk went on: names and ways of men; names and ways of ships; petty differences of opinion on matters of fact, place and time, over which Glanvil sat judicially as the final court of appeal, a lonely arbiter, knowing no more than those over whom he sat in judgment. So it had been from the first days of the voyage before the officers had sickened of each other's company; but of late, and particularly in the hotter stages of the voyage, Cheadle had grown more querulously perverse, Cochran more sullen, and Hendry less equable in his good humor.

Men and ships: these, at least, were safe topics of conversation, less disturbing than the talk of women that unconsciously penetrated and dominated them as soon as a ship passed from the monastic seclusion of the high seas within range of the communicable passions of life on shore; and Glanvil knew that, even though no word were spoken, this virus burned in the blood of the whole ship's company, like spores of a foreign pestilence invading virgin islands. He saw the same infection fevering in different degree the sallow face of Cheadle, Hendry's ruddy cheeks and the knot of potent bone and muscle which was Cochran. He felt it himself and was humiliated, unreasonably, since he was no less a man than the others.

Glanvil went to the bridge. There was Harvey, his third officer, the best of the bunch, the man of all his company with whom he could have made friends if friends had been possible. And Harvey, too, was Devon-born; they spoke the same language, knew the same landmarks. Physically, even, they had in common the color of men whose blood springs from the debatable borders of Tamar, Severn or Wye—blue eyes and olive skin. Now Harvey leaned on the rail, gazing upward at the black crags, unconscious of Glanvil's approach, and Glanvil envied him this unconsciousness, for it seemed to him a symbol of youth, of his own youth, pitiful, irrevocable.

SLOWLY the loom of Capri lifted and fell astern, the gulf opened its arms; Naples, no longer a nebula, resolved itself into a myriad of pin-points of light among which the beacon of the harbor drilled into the jet of night like a diamond. Forty feet below them, in the shadow of the well-deck, the emigrants whom they had embarked at Perth emerged. They clustered together, coats thrown over their shoulders like cloaks, clutching each other's shoulders, pointing with outstretched arms in the attitudes of heroic pictures.

Two hours later, in harbor water lustrous but lifeless, the *Vega* floated stern-on to the quay like a harpooned whale. Over her carcass swarmed the hordes of stevedores whose duty it was to disembowel her. Above a pandemonium of shrill dialect and in the clatter of unbattening hatches, in the confusing gleams and shadows of conflicting lights, Hendry, his face distorted by impotent violence, stood shouting curses that no one but the crew could understand.

In his own cabin Glanvil sat waiting for the agent to arrive. Within half an hour the Cantonese entered with a card printed in florid italics: "Marx & Esposito." Then followed a miracle of Neapolitan spruceness. On the little finger of his right hand he took care to display a spurious cameo; the index was armed with a long, pointed talon which testified to the gentility of his employment.

They faced each other in an atmosphere of grudging hostility, like two animals of the same genus but of different breed; and this hostility which in the case of Glanvil expressed itself in a forced friendliness, spurred the other to an exhibition of the very qualities that had aroused Glanvil's distaste. Over his second whisky the Neapolitan became familiar.

"Say, captain!" he began in an accent which he had derived from both sides of the Atlantic. "My name's Esposito. I've served my time in New Haven, Connecticut, and Cardiff, so you and me can understand each other. I'm not only Mr. Marx's partner, I'm what you might call his right-hand man. He leaves all the shipping business to me, and if there's any matter on which I can put you wise, I'm at your service. Suppose we get on to business right now."

Glanvil nodded. The sooner he was rid of the fellow the better.

"Say, boy!" Esposito proceeded. "I guess I've got a bit of a surprise packet for you." He put his finger-nail to his nose. "But don't you get scared; there's money in it. I guess you thought you were going right on to Liverpool for Christmas? Is that so? Well, that's your error. Our firm—Mr. Marx and myself, that is—has chartered this steamer for a trip to Africa. I can see you're not pleased; but that is neither here nor there. You'll get all the facts in your letter from your owners. In the meantime—"

Glanvil had risen quickly, his first disappointment flaming into unreasonable anger. It was monstrous that the *Vega* should be hawked round the Mediterranean like a coaster fit for the scrap-heap; monstrous that his own loyalty should have been sold to the bidding of this perfumed dago, that all the meditation and scheming which had colored his landfall should be sacrificed and broken.

With an effort Glanvil regained his self-control. While Esposito waited he read the letter from his owners. Apologetic, explanatory. Too good a charter to refuse —and so on.

"You see?" said Esposito. "We have a chance to make money—you, too. They are building a railway to Panda. It is the coming port of that whole coast. Now, there is a demand there for luxuries. The engineers have much money. Nothing to spend it on. And for you—a commission —no?"

"Look here, Mr. Esposito," Glanvil broke in. "I take it that I draw my pay from my own people. Between you and me there's no question of money. You've chartered this ship and I'm ready to take her wherever you choose to send her. I'm ready to meet you according to my owner's instructions, and that's that. I don't want to be encouraged by tips like a waiter or a cabman. I hope we understand each other."

Esposito tilted his head. "Sure, sure!" But in his realistic eyes the contempt with which he beheld this foolish integrity was visible. "Sure, boy! Always trust an Englishman." He held out his hand, and Glanvil unwillingly took it, consoled by the thought that the interview was ended. But Esposito had not finished.

"There's just one more thing," he said, hesitating, feeling his way into Glanvil's stormy mind. "Trust us not to be unreasonable, but in this particular case we ask a favor. You understand: so few ships going to Panda in these days. A passenger."

The word was a spark to fulminate Glanvil's impatience.

"Passenger? No, sir. This is not a passenger ship."

Esposito smiled and waved his cigar in assent.

"Understood—understood. But this is a case of charity; my partner will explain."

"He needn't," said Glanvil hotly.

Esposito's head began to wag with submerged chuckles. "I'll leave Mr. Marx to explain. Tomorrow. *A rivederci!*"

HE WENT ashore and Glanvil, his head still hot with anger, stood staring like a fool at the papers he had left on the table. He needed time to recover from the disgust and resentment with which this interview had inspired him.

He sent for Harvey.

"I've just had our orders from Liverpool," he said. "The ship has been chartered to our agents here. That puts a stopper on our having Christmas at home."

He looked at Harvey with a smile. It did him good to be brutal against his own will. Cruelty was the only possible outlet for his own disappointment, and Harvey its proper object. But Harvey took the blow without wincing. His eyes brightened with eagerness.

"Yes, sir. Where are they sending us?"

"Portuguese East Africa. Two months' charter. Renewable."

"That's good, sir. I've always wanted to get down that coast."

Sublime selfishness of youth! It was ludicrous to think how his futile ill-humor had recoiled on him. Glanvil laughed.

"Fortunate for you," he said. "It's a nasty knock for some of us, though."

"I'm sorry for that, sir,"

Of course he was not sorry. Glanvil knew it and envied him.

"Very well, Harvey." He spoke shortly.

Alone in his cabin Glanvil read the rest of his home letters, his mother's last. It was as usual. And then:

> The weather has been dreadful and the east wind set up a bad bout of my bronchitis. I'm afraid there is not much news. Poor Captain Brokenshire died on Thursday in his sleep, and Elsie Tyrer is engaged to that young Bennett at the National Provincial Bank.

He read the words twice over, then laughed, and swung his legs over the edge of the bunk. With what secret satisfaction had his mother written those words! Without knowing what he did he rose to his feet and stood in the middle of the cabin. The mirror above the collapsible washstand showed him his own face, dark, lined, bitter and incredibly hard. And yet, for the first time since the Colombo Japanese had brought him the picture in the cardboard tube, he felt that he was free.

With something of the same sense of liberation Glanvil made his way next morning to the agents' office in the Via Depretis. At a first glance the senior partner was no more prepossessing than the wretched Esposito; but, on second, Glanvil realized that here, at least, he was dealing with a man. Mountainous, dark, saturnine, he offered Glanvil a hand that was unadorned, a blunt, spadelike hand that surprised by the firmness of its grip. His voice was husky and guttural.

"Sorry, captain," he wheezed, "that I couldn't meet you last night. You saw Esposito?"

His eyelids flickered, his lips nearly smiled. There was no need to hide from him the impression that Esposito had made. He knew and proceeded to modify it.

"Yes, you saw Esposito. Well, you can trust Esposito as completely as you would trust me. Mr. Esposito is a Neapolitan. I am a Jew. That is the difference. If you like you can call me an European: I'm quite agreeable. I hope we shall be good friends."

Glanvil nodded.

"Very good. Now how long will you take to discharge that cargo? Shall we say three days?"

"Say five."

"Call it four. Very good. That means that we can get you off in ten. Ten days—call it twelve. We'll try to do better. Esposito has already told you where you are going, and the nature of your cargo. I dare say he also suggested that you might profit by the occasion. Panda's an open market. No?"

Glanvil stiffened. "I'm a sailor, Mr. Marx."

"You're a sailor—a sailor. Quite so. Very good. Now there's one other thing of which I imagine Mr. Esposito spoke to you. Yes?"

"There was," said Glanvil ominously.

The sloping bulk of Mr. Marx rolled silently forward; his elbows descended on to the desk before him; above his clasped hands he stared right into Glanvil's eyes.

"There was," he repeated. "The question of a passenger. Yes. But that's—your own affair. It's for you to decide."

"I've decided already."

"Already. And I think I can guess your decision. But wait a moment." He leaned over the table and wagged a solemn forefinger. "I am not going to ask you a favor. You can leave that out. One does not ask favors of strangers. This, as a matter of fact, is a matter of Christian charity. You are a Christian, presumably; I am not. I am not particularly charitable either, but I am human. It is a long story. Let me explain and do not interrupt me.

"FIRST you are to imagine a small town on the coast of England: Torquay. You know it? Very good. There is a small house and a family of two persons, mother and daughter. The father, who was a sailor like yourself, had died at sea or in some foreign port. I don't know and it doesn't matter. He leaves them not destitute. He leaves them with a small income—very small—and that small house. How to live?

"How to live? It is obvious. The daughter is a girl of eighteen. She finds employment, dactylographer, typewriter, in the office of an advocate. That is not enough. This Torquay is a watering place. The mother lets the apartments of the house to inquilines, visitors who come to take the baths in summer. In the big hotels—who knows?—there are foreigners who are not ashamed to work while they learn the language. One of these, a maître-d'hôtel, takes the apartment. It is a contract he will stay for a year. He is Italian, a handsome boy, not like the others in Torquay.

"In that life, without color—I know it; I have been to Newcastle—he is a hero. Romance. Is not that true? Very well. That is what the daughter thinks. It is natural. They fall in love. When the year comes to an end, they cannot separate. He is going back to Italy, to Naples.

"So these two marry. Civil marriage. The mother conveniently dies. The house is sold. The Italian takes his wife back to Naples. There he is still in a hotel making good money—who knows? In Torquay a baby has been born. The father is proud; Italians are good parents.

"Then comes the war. At first it is all right; then Italy enters, and the father is called to serve. They send him not to the Austrian front but to Somali, Italian Somaliland, to a place called Mogadishu. What that is like I don't know. '*Bruto*,' I have heard them call it. That means ugly. All through the war he stays there. The wife is with his sister, her *cognati*, in Naples. She gets a little money from the Italian government, so much for her, so much again for the child; a trifle but life down here is cheap. He does not write often. That is not surprising. Very few Italian ships go to Eritrea and Somali. She waits in Naples with the *cognati*, who are kind to her for the sake of her child.

"So the war ends. The little girl is now five years old, and the mother is expecting every day that her husband will return. Suddenly the money from the government stops. At first it cannot be understood, and then they find he has taken his discharge in Somali and entered the employment of a Portuguese—Almeida was the name—who trades on that coast. Why, I can't tell you. These handsome boys get on in the world, and once you take a fancy to Africa— But that is nothing. When next they hear from him he is still in Almeida's employment, farther down the coast, at Panda. You see I am getting nearer home?"

Glanvil nodded. "I think I see where the wind is," he said.

"See where the wind is. Very well. Letter, as I tell you, from Panda. No words about her joining him, and no money. *No money!*

"That is what made the *cognati* turn on her like animals. Neapolitans are—how shall I call it?—realists. The sisters of Salvia—that is the father's name—are not ready to keep her when no more money comes. The child is a different matter; the child is of their own blood and a plaything as well, but the mother is a foreigner, not even connected by marriage, in the sight of God—that is to say, the priests—a fool of a foreigner who has been picked up and dropped by their handsome brother. So they will keep the child to play with and your countrywoman can pick up her living in the street. Why not?

"That I can't answer. Perhaps it was because she still trusted her husband; perhaps she wouldn't be parted from the child; perhaps, because her nature was against it. She took possession of the child and appealed to your English Consulate. What could they do for her? She wasn't English; she was Italian.

"And now—a surprise. She didn't want to get back to Torquay. She wanted to follow her husband, the man who was starving her, to Panda. And there, of course, they could do nothing. Panda was the other end of the world, and she a foreigner as far as they were concerned. One thing they might do officially, and they did it. They put her in touch with an English Society for the Protection or Propagation or Preservation of something or other that gave her a Christian roof and helped her to find work of the kind that she'd done before she married Salvia.

"THEY offered her a post in Rome. She wouldn't take it. If Salvia were returning to Naples she must be there to meet him. Understand, she was still writing to him, she believed that the *cognati*, who now called her what they'd tried to make her, had intercepted his replies, and probably money as well. When she found work she settled down in a cheap apartment of her own, and there she got an answer to her letters from Salvia. By this time no doubt he'd heard his sisters' version of what had happened. After conduct like that she couldn't expect him to support her. He was happy in Panda, and meant to stay there, and if she wanted anything from him she'd better come and fetch it. Of course he was laughing; he knew she couldn't.

"That work—I've forgotten to make this clear. She got her job as dactylographist in the office of a firm of general merchants. Not very well paid. Wages are low in Italy, particularly women's wages, and her employers weren't philanthropists—far from it. But she has a conscience in her work and was useful because the firm had dealings with England and she could handle English correspondence as well as Italian. The head of the firm knew a little about her, and had an eye for a pretty woman, too.

"Very well. She sat down and worked for these people for about a year, waiting for a miracle. Not another word from Panda—and then, one day, she sits up and rubs her eyes. She has to copy a letter to a firm of shipowners in England about one of their ships that is being chartered to make a voyage to Panda, and next a manifest of cargo that is being consigned to the firm of Almeida and Diaz. All in one day! The miracle has come. No?"

The vast man swayed backward again on his chair, his thumbs in his waistcoat pockets, his thick lips parted, his eyes smiling. It seemed as if he were actually carried away by the excitement of his narrative.

"So she comes in to the head of the firm and tells him what she wants. A passage to Panda! That takes some courage, I can tell you. Her employer isn't a philanthropist; he's not even a Christian. He's a damned fat old German Jew, captain, that has taken on Italian nationality for business reasons, and he looks like losing his best correspondence clerk. What does he say?" The big man's stomach was shaken with chuckles. "He says: 'That's the captain's affair. It's a private arrangement.' No?"

Marx threw away the stump of his half-smoked cigar and lit another, spouting blue smoke upward like a submerged whale.

"It's a queer story," said Glanvil.

"A queer story. Yes? Wait."

Marx swayed forward again and touched the button of an electric bell on his desk. The door of the outer office opened. Glanvil became aware of a quick step behind him. A woman stood at the table between Marx and himself. Marx addressed her in Italian.

"*E pronta quella lettera pel' Orient Line?*"

"*Gia, signore. Eccolo.*"

She handed him a typed sheet and stood waiting for his signature while he read it through. Marx stared at the paper, but he did not read it: all his senses were strained to catch the effect that his strategy had produced on Glanvil's mind, to feel what Glanvil was feeling. And Glanvil, knowing this, fought hard against this cunning appeal to sentiment.

He saw, with critical eyes, a woman of middle height, slender, and slenderer for the black clothes that she wore. These and her own darkness gave something of a foreign elegance to her figure. And yet, when he came to look at her, he saw that she was undoubtedly of his own race. Her hair was black, but not blue-black nor coarse in texture; beneath its darkness burned a luster of copper, and there were threads of silver in it.

Her lowered eyes were invisible, fixed humbly on the scattered papers of Marx's table; but when she raised them in answer to some muttered Italian phrase, Glanvil saw that they were of a dreamy blue. The skin of her neck was white, but not with that southern pallor of old ivory; beneath it he could see the fluttering pulsation of quick heartbeats; its surface flushed and paled like a cloud at sunset.

Her hands, that were clasped before her, trembled, too. Glanvil guessed that she knew who he was, and these signs of secret expectation made him ashamed of himself and his companion sitting over her in inhuman judgment like fanciers at a show. As he sat there, dumb and ashamed, there gathered in his mind the pitiful emotion of the story which Marx had told him. He wanted to speak out, to put the woman at her ease; to disclaim for his part the criticism that she must read into the silence which Marx so deliberately prolonged.

AT LAST Marx raised his eyes from the letter. He glanced from one to the other with an amused and wicked smile in them. Then he spoke in English.

"Very well. Yes, that is quite right." He looked at Glanvil inquiringly. Glanvil held his tongue. "Quite right. Yes. You may go."

The woman took the paper in silence and moved toward the door, followed by Marx's eyes. Glanvil rose and pushed back his chair, determined to put an end to this inhuman comedy. He spoke in tones more rough than he intended.

"One moment! You are Mrs. Salvia?"

She turned; the color mounted swiftly to her face.

"Yes."

"My name's Glanvil. I am captain of the *Vega*. I understand that you want a passage to Panda."

"I do. Very much indeed."

"For yourself and your daughter?"

"Yes."

Her lips trembled, but she set them tight in a line that showed agonized expectation and all that she had suffered before. The silence was too pitiful to be borne.

"Mr. Marx has told me a little," he said; "but before we say any more about it, I want you to realize that my ship is not a passenger boat. We have no women aboard. There are no conveniences or refinements. The food is rough and ready. My officers have no time for passengers, either. If you came with us, you'd have to look after yourself and live to yourself. You can be certain of discomfort. That has to be understood."

"I quite understand it," she said breathlessly. "Of course I do."

He took no notice of this reply; her eagerness neutralized its value. He knew that he had been inveigled into a concession that his reason would have denied, and was determined to qualify it by an exaggerated severity, to make it clear to this palpitating woman and, above all, to Marx that his action was neither humane nor personal.

"You must realize," he went on, "that I shall not allow your presence to make any difference to the discipline of my ship. The whole thing is entirely out of order. I can't even say, for the moment, whether I can find you a quarter. Whatever it is, you'll have to put up with it."

"Anything will do," she said quietly. "I shan't complain."

He was silent for a moment.

"In that case," he said, "I will see what I can do for you. You understand I make no promises. This is entirely a business arrangement between you and me; you have no official standing."

"I understand perfectly," she answered, then hesitated. "Before we say any more about it," she said, "there is one thing more important than anything else: I can't even accept your—kindness until I know what it will cost."

Her directness took him aback, for to answer her question implied an immediate decision and so far he had not decided anything.

"No," he said slowly. "Money does not enter the arrangement."

"That is generous of you," she said slowly. "I didn't intend that, and I don't think—"

He turned on her roughly but smiling.

"Take it or leave it."

Her lips trembled. "I'll take it." She

smiled back at him. "And I won't thank you."

"You'd better not," he answered gruffly.

She went. Glanvil began to pace the room restlessly as though it were the bridge of his ship. Glancing round, he saw the fat man red in the face and shaken with noiseless chuckles, his eyes more slitlike than ever. He grew hot to find himself an object of amusement.

"What's the matter with you now?" he asked angrily.

Marx wagged his head, still smiling.

"The prologue of a comedy. No?"

THE meaning of that remark of Marx haunted Glanvil often in the days that followed, days in which Esposito hovered about the *Vega* and inspired the stevedores to incredible effort. Subtly he knew that a new factor had come into his life, that he must be prepared for the coming of Helen Salvia and her child as one is prepared for a crisis. Why, he did not know.

A curious reluctance possessed him. Knowing its inevitable effect, he still could not shake it off. Even on the day of their sailing only Rennels, the obscure steward, knew of a passenger. And so it was that Harvey, amazed and troubled, brought word to Glanvil, as he sat at lunch, of a woman with a strange tale of having booked passage.

"It—it's all right, Mr. Harvey," Glanvil said. "Mr. Marx has arranged this lady's passage. Please tell the chief steward."

Two hours later the *Vega* was at sea. By sunset they had lost the land and plunged into dank and windy darkness. All through that evening Glanvil kept the bridge. He took a hasty dinner in his own cabin, and when midnight came, stormy and starless, he was still on deck. This self-imposed duty suited his mood, for though in port he had hated the sea and wished that he had done with it, he returned to it with zest, as to an element natural and reassuring, the only one in contact with which he was really himself.

Once at sea on the bridge of the *Vega* the gloom and indecision that had vexed him in Naples were blown away. Now he had better things to think of than Mrs. Salvia—Helen Salvia, stewardess, as the papers which Marx had delivered to him on sailing described her. By virtue of this description she had ceased to be an intruder with romantic possibilities; she had taken her place in the articles and the bills of lading; their relation was now officially defined and therefore unembarrassing.

In the empty cabin on the starboard side which Glanvil had allotted to her, Helen Salvia lay with Gina in her arms. The swell which lifted the *Vega* held her with racing screw, then left her to subside with a shudder into the sickening deeps, made Mrs. Salvia's head and stomach swim uneasily, but she dared not move for fear of wakening the child, whose sleep these gigantic heavings and sinkings seemed not to disturb.

This was the second violent uprooting that her life had suffered. Something in her cramped attitude, in the narrowness of the cabin, in the sickening heat, reminded her of the first of these experiences. Then, as now, life with one staggering leap had cast her with her baby in her arms into another narrow chamber with one light burning, a crowded second-class compartment of the Italian State Railways, boring southward through the darkness at sixty miles an hour. She remembered the other vigil as vividly as if it had been yesterday.

That voyage had shown her husband to her, really for the first time, as alien to her. She could remember him as she had seen him, holding Gina, while he talked in rapid Italian to a woman. She had been set apart from them—even from Gina.

A WHITE jealousy took her by the throat and almost forced her to cry out. At last she knew why he had brought her to Italy; it was for the sake of Gina, that piece of his own flesh which he had grafted on her body like a parasite, that flower in his own dark image that was still unable to live without her. Otherwise he had no more need of her. And yet she loved him. Even as she saw him then, unshaven and travel-stained, like any shabby foreigner of Soho, she could not forget his white splendid teeth, his eyes that were like dark, clear amber, daring yet soft as a woman's. In that moment she had become jealous of her own child, and the monstrous inhumanity of this feeling brought with it a revulsion of pity and tenderness that made her wonder if she were going mad. Eight bells.

A pane of frosted glass brightened, and

at the same moment her vision of an old unhappiness was broken by a snatch of ragtime hummed by the engineer in the next cabin who had just come off his watch below. She closed her eyes, for any light hurt them. She thought no more of that tragic journey, yet, in another moment, her mind had hurried her back to Naples, to the precipitous street, festooned with washing, in which she had learned resignation.

For a year and more she had persuaded herself that she loved Laurence no longer and solaced her heart with the child; but when the war came, and Laurence, like a dark panther in his gray-green uniform, had left her, she had been humbly glad to piece together the fragments of that broken passion; she had even felt grateful that Gina was so like him. He was her first love, nothing could alter that. In separation she forgot her disillusionment and built for herself a new illusion, looking eagerly for his return and, when this hope vanished, scheming desperately to join him.

It seemed incredible that her scheme should have succeeded, that this plunging ship was actually carrying her toward the hour for which she had lived. This moment, she told herself, should be one of ecstasy; yet, beneath her exultation, she was afraid, knowing on what slender foundations the hopes that had sustained her through the last five years were laid, half regretting the security of Marx's office which she had abandoned for this uncertain quest.

Whatever Marx had achieved, her whole fate really rested in the hands of Glanvil, that austere and somber sailor whom she had seen for no more than ten minutes in Marx's office. She realized the exceptional nature of his favor in accepting herself and Gina as passengers on his ship; and this set her wondering what had prompted him to do so. She could not guess how much of her story Marx had told him. Perhaps she would never know; for in the picture that she had made for herself he seemed an unapproachable creature. It was curious that in spite of this dispassionate remoteness she had regarded him, from the first, with a complete confidence which she could not explain, feeling that no word that she said to him would be misinterpreted or judged by standards different from her own.

Of course he was English; that, perhaps, was the explanation of her confidence and of his kindness. Technically and spiritually she was now on English soil, among men from whom a standard of conduct might be expected toward women, and this was the most reassuring aspect of her new adventure. These countrymen of hers were so different from the Neapolitans among whom she had passed the last six years. In a Neapolitan the wearing of a uniform begot a swaggering arrogance, so different from the bearing of the fair-haired boy who had met her on the gangway and tried to turn her away. She had nearly laughed for joy and relief as she looked into his blue eyes and heard, in his speech, the hint of a west-country burr. "Mr. Harvey," the quartermaster had called him. Harvey sounded like a Devonshire name. Was it possible?

GLANVIL, anxious though he was to dismiss all thought of his passengers from his mind, soon discovered the futility of such a thought. At breakfast the news fairly throbbed with them, even before a word was said. And he had to listen then, while Cheadle moralized and Hendry grew sentimental, and Cochran sat in silence, glowered, thinking his own somber thoughts.

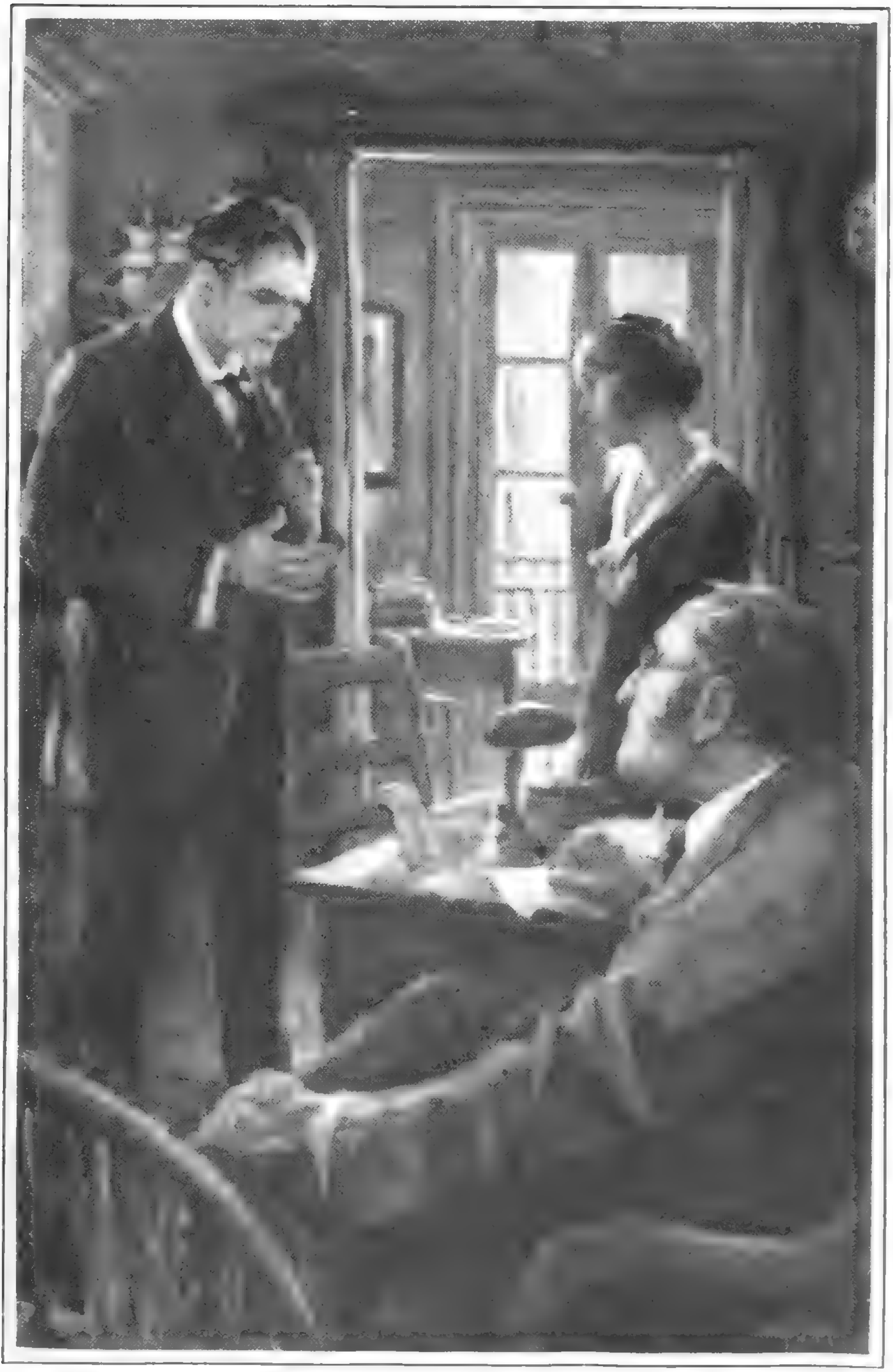
Later, on deck, he was obsessed by thoughts of them, until at last he went to their cabin and, bidden to enter, was almost shocked by his first real sight of Mrs. Salvia. She was so young, so virginal that he almost recoiled. Then gruffly he inquired for her comfort. She was well, she said; the sea, of course, was rough.

"The glass is rising—by night we should be out of this," he said.

"Yes, yes," she said, amused at his seriousness. "I'm not complaining; I feel very lucky to be here."

With the last sentence she lowered her eyes, as if his stare offended her modesty in the middle of an admission of indebtedness to him; but the eyes of the child still fixed him solemnly from under a square fringe of black curls, eyes shaped like olives, wary as those of a small animal, yet confident in the protection of her mother's arms. He found it ridiculous that such a scrutiny should be embarrassing, yet so it was; for Glanvil knew little of children, and this child belonged not only to another race but, as it seemed to him, to another species.

"The little girl seems all right," he said.



Her lips trembled. "I'll take it." She smiled at Glanvil. "And I won't thank you." "You'd better not," he answered gruffly.

"Yes, she's splendid," the woman answered with a flash of pleasure. "You must say good morning to Captain Glanvil, Gina."

A break that was like laughter came into her voice as she spoke; for a moment all her shyness was lost in motherhood; her fingers tightened on the child's body, in a movement that was almost reflex in its spontaneity; her eyes, no longer bashful, glowed.

"Gina, darling," she whispered, "you mustn't be shy now."

Very slowly, with a self-consciousness infinitely less than Glanvil's, the child silently put her fist out and Glanvil took it. It was warm and red, with little pink nails. Glanvil did not know what to do with it. Flushing in spite of himself, he stifled an impulse to pick the creature up in his arms and hold it close to him. Surely, through the same sensitive channel, the mother must have been aware of his feelings.

To his comfort he discovered that she was not.

"English isn't natural to her with any one but me," she said, eager to excuse. "Say 'Buon' giorno,' Gina."

"Buon' giorno," the child solemnly repeated and the sound of these clear-cut foreign words in a voice so babyish seemed to Glanvil a whimsical performance. He laughed out loud, and Gina, alarmed, absolved him of further responsibility by snatching her hand away.

"Oh, you're dreadful! You really are," Mrs. Salvia murmured, her lips on Gina's cheek, and in this interval Glanvil regained his self-possession.

"I won't keep you any longer," he said brusquely. "I only wanted to make it quite clear to you that anything which can be done for you will be done. If things don't suit you, you've only to mention it to the chief steward. If that doesn't act, you can come to me. But I don't think you'll have any difficulty. The Chinese man who looks after you is my own steward. He's quite honest.

"Well, that's all, I think," he said. "Good-by."

"Good-by," she repeated.

As he stepped into the alleyway "one bell" clanged. In another fifteen minutes he would be due on the flying bridge to take the sun; and indeed, when he reached the deck the sun was already visible, a disc of white phosphorescence alternately dim and gleaming in the watery sky. Stalking for'ard along the clean and empty deck, he wondered if the same awkwardness would overtake him in the presence of a child of his own. Some day he might be called upon to face this curious problem and find himself eager to win the confidence of a child like that—or children. When he came to think of it, this woman whom he had regarded with the vague distrust of a savage confronted by the mystery of taboo was nothing but a child herself.

On the bridge Cochran greeted him laconically:

"Stromboli two degrees on the starboard now, sir."

"Keep her there, Mr. Cochran," he replied.

THAT night came rain. Through it they stole obscurely down the channel that shone like a wet street between the lamps of Reggio and Messina. Next morning the sun rose on the port bow as clean as if the rain had refreshed it, and the *Vega* herself, drenched in the level light, appeared a miracle of cleanliness from which the last contaminations of the land had been scoured and bleached away. On deck all was well; for the breeze that blew the ripples across the path of the sun, came dead abaft at a pace no greater than the ten knots that the *Vega* was making. This morning air had a quality of dry lightness and clarity that tempted the crew to look upward to the white screens of the flying bridge, gleaming against a blue that quivered in the invisible heat that trailed from the black funnel. Now it was good to be alive again.

As Glanvil emerged from the chart room and took his turn along the bridge he saw the third engineer, a raw youth from Greenock, come whistling forward from his bath with the sun in his hair. To Glanvil this man was almost a stranger; but when he saw the energy and blitheness of his gait, he smiled and waved his hand, and Macallum smiled back at him, wondering what was the reason of this demonstration. A moment later Cheadle, who did not bathe in these latitudes, appeared and spat over the side; then he tramped for'ard to the level of the bridge, and Glanvil, leaning over, called, "Good morning!" Cheadle looked up and saluted, his face relaxing in a smile.

"I hope you found the passengers comfortable, sir," he said.

"A little rocky yesterday, Mr. Cheadle. They should be all right today."

"I think I'll take the opportunity of having a word with the lady this morning," said Cheadle. "Cheer her up a bit. It gives one a homely feeling, sir, to have that little girl on board."

"She's a shy little creature," said Glanvil.

"Aye, but they always take to me, somehow," Cheadle replied.

By three bells Mrs. Salvia was sitting in the grass chair outside her cabin. Glanvil could see her from the bridge, gray and small and immensely isolated, for the awnings were not yet up. He walked to and fro, enjoying the air of that sunny elevation. Time after time he turned and looked at her, expecting recognition, for surely she must have seen him in such a conspicuous position; but her eyes were always fixed on the blue sea or on the child who laughed and played about her. He wondered if she were disregarding him on purpose; it seemed possible that he had frightened both of them on the day before. He hadn't meant to do that. It was an impression that must be corrected. Yet, when a little later Cheadle presented himself to the woman, Glanvil shyly avoided the saloon deck.

He began to walk the bridge rapidly with his hands behind his back, and every time that he approached its starboard extremity, too confused and proud to look downward, he heard snatches of speech from Cheadle and Mrs. Salvia, and once a sudden peal of Gina's laughter. For a moment there was silence; Cheadle had left her, but almost immediately he returned, dragging with him a deck-chair which he placed at Mrs. Salvia's side. There was no shyness about Cheadle.

For half an hour he paced the bridge in envious and angry silence. Ah Qui, emerging from the saloon alleyway, swung the bell for lunch and as Glanvil descended he saw Cheadle, who had risen from his chair, catch at the child, who stood before him with folded hands, and hug her in his arms in the way that his own impulse had shown him on the morning before. He saw the face of Mrs. Salvia regarding this scene with a mute and, as it seemed to him, a puzzled smile.

Then swiftly her eyes flashed in Glanvil's direction, his hand came up to the salute, but the sun blinded her so that she did not see his gesture, and he blundered on into the saloon doorway and out of sight, wondering if, for some unexplained offense, she had purposely avoided him. Perhaps, he reflected, she thought that he had been remiss in not inquiring for her that morning. He was not going to stand on ceremonies of that kind. Hadn't he made that quite clear enough a week ago in Marx's office?

But the discomfort Glanvil endured that morning was nothing to what followed. After Cheadle's first overture the comedy of which Marx had signaled the prologue began with a vengeance, for even if Mrs. Salvia had not been physically attractive she was unique. Her loneliness was a challenge to the chivalry of every man on board, and the approach to her presence was made through the medium of Gina, a kind of flying embassy with whom the most remote could establish contact.

THAT same afternoon the third engineer followed the lead of his chief. The encounter was natural enough, for his cabin was only separated from that of Mrs. Salvia by an iron bulkhead, and Gina, with the instinct of a kitten sniffing every corner of its new home, had strayed from her mother's side to raise the curtain and fix inquisitive eyes on a man in a faded blue boiler-suit who lay stretched on his locker reading *La Vie Parisienne.* Her mother called her, first in Italian, then in English. Five minutes later the third engineer, his fair mop subdued, his badged cap tilted rakishly, was established opposite Mrs. Salvia in the deck chair that Glanvil had thoughtfully provided.

The awkwardness and the uncouth Glasgow accent of this visitor amused her. At first he seemed to her like some ungainly Newfoundland puppy, a creature whose native clumsiness must be humored, but as she listened gravely, without the suspicion of a twinkle in her blue eyes, his reserve melted away and he began to give her his confidence, tempted by the unfamiliar company of a woman to talk to of homely things, of his own mother who waited for him in a wet and windy street in Greenock, of the heathery hillside that overhung the valleys behind Dunoon with special reference to his national anthem, "Mary of

Argyle," and even of a lassie named Jean Frazier with whom the song and the place were associated in his mind.

As soon as Macallum left her, Cheadle reappeared. By this time he seemed almost an old friend, but her instinct told her quickly that it was Gina rather than herself that attracted him. All the time that he was speaking to her, with his flat slow Lancashire inflections, his lusterless eyes were following the movements of the child. He coaxed her toward him, and when he had caught her, imprisoned her between his bony knees; his long hands were hungry for her body and her soft limbs.

He seemed to Helen Salvia weary and older than his years, a little slovenly and pathetic. He was different in every way from what she imagined a sailor should be, and whenever she let him talk his mind flapped back like a tired bird to Newton-in-Makerfield, a place that she had never heard of, but which, to him, was evidently the axle of the universe. She tried to bring the conversation round to Glanvil, for her discovery that he came from Brixham had set her curiosity on fire; but as soon as the captain's name was mentioned Cheadle became wary, and she was quick to guess that the theme was one he wished to avoid. No doubt he was a little jealous of a younger man's command; and that was natural enough. Tactfully she abandoned the subject, her curiosity unsatisfied.

Nor yet did Hendry, who followed Cheadle in this procession of visitors who swooped down on her, like greedy bees upon a solitary flower, give her any greater satisfaction. Infinitely more gallant than the forlorn Cheadle or the awkward Macallum, he buzzed about her like a great red bumble. He was bluff and hearty, leaning up against the stanchion and smiling.

She knew at once that this man would like to make love to her but dared not, and when, a moment later, he mentioned his wife and volunteered to show her a photograph, she guessed the reason of the restraint that underlay his fear, the wavering fidelity of a man who knows his own weakness and tries to hide it even from himself. It was an uneasy interview, and yet she felt sorry for him. She felt sorry for all sailors.

Yet this element of compassion never entered into her relations with Glanvil or Harvey. It was not surprising that Glanvil occupied a position apart. Was he not, by the grace of Marx, the agent of Destiny, to whom she owed her very presence on the *Vega?* It did not seem strange to her that he kept his distance: the elevation of the flying bridge above the saloon deck was a symbol that she accepted. Even if he never spoke to her again before they reached Panda she determined that she would not feel slighted.

She trusted him implicitly; his command gave a sense of stability to the whole adventure, and the fact that in their divided childhood they had almost been neighbors, made her feel that between them there was no need of explanation.

HARVEY, in a smaller degree, shared the confidence she placed in his commander. He was the first member of the *Vega's* crew that she had met; and that of itself gave him a special, if sentimental, claim on her. In his case also there were no reservations. They slipped without effort into a perfectly natural friendship based on a host of common associations and memories beside which the slight difference in their ages counted for nothing. She always looked forward to his visits, for they talked of Devonshire ways and places, and his speech, which in moments of enthusiasm always revealed his origin, had the power of transporting her imagination backward to idyllic days. Add to this that she liked to look at him; for he was clean and handsome and of an engaging frankness.

She soon discovered that he had a passion for books, and though this was a province into which she could not follow him far, her attentive silence encouraged him to talk of his enthusiasm until his eyes glowed and in the rapture of self-expression his face radiated a happiness that she was eager to share. Whichever way she took him, he rang true, like a well-found bell, and not the least of the qualities she admired in him was his loyalty to Glanvil.

There remained the second and fourth engineers and the second officer, Cochran. So far she had achieved no contact with Cochran nearer than a passing salute. The man seemed rough and untamed. He went about his duties doggedly as though he had neither time nor interest for anything else. She laughed to herself when she discovered that he too had fallen a victim to the fascinations of Gina; the strange couple were playing ball together on the after well-deck and when she saw them she retired guiltily, leaving Gina to her conquest, for Cochran had caught her on his way from the bath in trousers and singlet and she feared to embarrass him. From that moment she decided that she liked him too.

She liked them all, not so much for what they were as for being English, and easy to understand. More than this, there was something in their deference to her and in their naïve confidences that complimented her and made her feel that she stood to them in a relation that was vaguely maternal. One could always mother an Englishman; one might as well mother a tiger as an Italian. She felt that it was her duty to listen to them when they disclosed to her the things that were nearest to their hearts but never, among themselves, confessed. However different they might be in age or physique, the secrets that they consciously or unconsciously revealed to her were curiously alike. Whether it were the hungry child-worship of Cheadle, the nostalgia of Macallum, or Hendry's repressed admiration, the charge was sacred, and she was honored by it.

It was valuable to her in yet another way, for when she identified her own interest with theirs and allowed their thoughts to be mirrored on her silence like the images of casual trees upon the surface of a stream, she was able to forget the direction in which her own life steadily flowed, and the bourne to which it drew momentarily nearer: the hot strand of Panda, as uncertain in its revelation as the further shore of death itself. In the suspension of life at sea it was easy to believe that time stood still. For three mornings in succession her eyes had opened on the same halcyon blue that had met them on the day after their passage of the straits of Messina. At sunset on the third Harvey, who with Glanvil had been her least frequent visitor, suddenly called her to the port side and showed her through his glasses a peaked line of cloud, more dense and real than any vapor, clouds petrified, clouds suddenly fixed in ice, they seemed.

"The mountains of Crete," he told her. "Hundred-citied Crete. Take the glasses—you can see better."

She took them clumsily, touching his fingers. "I'm sorry," he muttered, and at that moment she found herself face to face with Glanvil, who had approached them unheard. Harvey hurriedly saluted. "Letting Mrs. Salvia have a look at Crete, sir," he said.

Glanvil turned without a smile. "Yes, Mr. Harvey."

He passed on, but in the look that he had given them there was something that disturbed her. She was blushing. She felt the color rise in her neck and throat, she felt it burning in her ears, a flood beyond her control. Confused, ashamed, she stood staring at the exalted snow but seeing nothing at all until, of a sudden, the word Crete came back to her, but not with connotations that Harvey had suggested. She recognized it as the first milestone on her pilgrimage. After Crete, Port Said; after Suez, Panda. Panda was growing nearer, calculably nearer.

The Delta might have thrilled Helen Salvia once; now it was just a milestone on her journey. She did go ashore in Port Said with Harvey, and it was oddly sweet and reminiscent of her girlhood to wander about its dusty streets with him. She was amazed, too, and troubled by the jealousy she felt when, in a shop, he asked her aid in buying a present for a lady. And she was touched and disturbed again when back on the *Vega* she found the present in her cabin and knew the lady was herself.

Glanvil had watched them go ashore with glum and brooding eyes. He seemed more glad to be off than usual, even after coaling.

Helen, too, was glad of the trip through the great canal.

On the boat deck it was getting cold and colder. The *Vega*, lucky in finding a clear passage, made a steady six knots, and a southerly air blew chilly over the desert. Their progress was so smooth and dreamlike, the white scroll of sand with its recurrent phantom palms so steadily, so silently unwound that she might easily have been hypnotized into sitting there until she froze.

FROM the hour when the *Vega* left Suez reeking in a blood-red sunset behind her it seemed as if the rhythm of life aboard her quickened, and its conditions became more intense. Twelve hours before, with muted engines she had stolen through the sand like a ship in a dream; from the Gulf of Suez she fled before the north wind like a thing possessed by the barren horror of Sinai, whose mountains encompassed her in their lunar desolation. On the second evening, as they made the Brothers, the wind fell dead like a bird caught in the fume of some poisonous crater. Westward a young moon sank helplessly upon the molten summits of the hills that sheltered Thebes.

"December or no December," Cheadle growled, "we're going to get it hot. I shall issue tea to the stoke-hold."

Day after day the *Vega* plodded southward over a black and glassy sea; the languid wind kept pace with her; her awnings hung as slack as though she lay suspended in a calm; through the hot silence her engines groaned as if their bearings threatened to seize. Day after day the sun rose with a fiercer zest. Gathering strength from their distress, giving them no grace of twilight, it rushed westward eager to close its torrid circle and rise to torture them again. In this vast forcing house the bodies of the *Vega's* crew wilted and strange spiritual growths arose.

The solitary Glanvil was aware of their germination. His isolation made him sensitive to the least change in the atmospheric tension of the saloon; he knew that as the heat increased and the *Vega* plowed her way toward strange stars, a tempest was brewing, but it was not until they had escaped the jaws of Bab-el-Mandeb and rounded the white sands of Guardafui, hugging the Somali coast with the monsoon abaft, that the storm broke.

Gina was its unconscious cause. She had become the pet of the ship. Even Cochran wooed her. But she was still shy of him, and a little afraid. And he, for all his roughness, adored her. He hated himself for not having thought to make her a Christmas gift at Suez as most of the others did; he pursued her and so drove her away, not knowing the coquettish nature of the child.

She was pleased to flirt with him for a moment, but she was quick, too, to realize his difference from her other admirers.

His clumsiness, his greedy eyes and all his rugged exterior frightened her no less than his gruff whispers and the air of mysterious secrecy that he put into his courtship. It pleased her to nestle close to the smooth face of Harvey, her real friend, who had carried her through the street at Port Said and given her a jade necklace; to sit on the bony knees of Cheadle, who fed her with Turkish delight and smelt of Florida Water; to play as a concession with the Masonic symbol on the chief steward's watch-chain; she was even ready, aping the attitude of her mother, to give a shy and serious greeting to Glanvil; but Cochran was a different matter altogether. First of all he had given her nothing; secondly, she did not understand him; thirdly, he was not a friend of her mother's; in short, his company was neither profitable nor amusing, so she avoided it.

At this point he might easily have let well alone and accepted his dismissal; but this the stubbornness of his nature and his unabated hunger would not allow. In face of all the child's pouting discouragements he persisted, until her distaste hardened into a positive dislike. She ran from him whenever she saw him approaching, seeking immediate refuge with any of her allies that happened to be near, hiding herself breathlessly behind the lampman or the carpenter or even Ah Qui, the moon-faced, pock-marked Cantonese. They all laughed at her and her fears. Cochran laughed too, but he took their laughter bitterly and determined to be even with her before he had finished.

One evening he found Gina alone and snatched his opportunity. He suddenly appeared to her, ruddy from his bath, in a flowered cotton kimono.

"Now, I've got you!" he grinned, picking her up and holding her against his hairy chest. Gina wriggled in his arms; she fought and tore at his face with her nails like a cat, but the pain and her fierceness only made him hold her tighter. He covered her face with greedy kisses, and when she had screamed her strength away, he put her down and laughed as she ran wailing to her mother.

LATER, Mrs. Salvia confided what had happened to Harvey. The night was stifling, breathless. Watery lightning flickered over the sky.

"Of course," she told him, "Mr. Cochran is rather what you'd call a rough diamond; he never speaks to me; but that was pushing roughness a little too far. Gina was nearly frightened out of her life. The child dislikes him, so I wish he'd leave her alone."

Harvey left her in a hot fury. He went straight to Cochran's cabin. Cochran was not there. He found him drinking whisky with the chief steward; the futile scratch of Gina's fingernail had left a wheal down his brick-red cheek from the left eye to the angle of his mouth. He looked up, flushed and good-humored.

"Hullo, Third," he said. "Have one with me?"

Then Harvey told him what he thought of him. "The kid can't bear the sight of you," he said. "Can't you leave her alone?"

Cochran listened, a tumid vein bulged, like another vertical wheal, on his shining forehead; but he never ceased to smile, and Harvey's anger increased. Rennels, who was standing in his shirt-sleeves, took hold of his arm with a hot hand.

"Come off it, old boy," he leered. "Come off it. Let the Second have his joke the same as the rest of us, and try a drop of this. The right stuff, I can tell you. V. O. V. and no nonsense."

As he spoke he reached down a glass which he would have forced into Harvey's hands; but Harvey scarcely heeded him; he was looking at the vein in Cochran's forehead and the smile on his lips. The night seemed to grow hotter round them; all three were sweating and staring at each other, Rennels fuddled and anxious, Cochran still smiling with a pipe in his teeth, Harvey blind with an increasing anger.

"You may smile, Cochran," he went on, "but if you try that game again—"

"Steady, boy, steady! Don't shout, now," Rennels persuaded.

Cochran took the pipe from the grip of his teeth and tilted his chair backward.

"Well, Harvey, what then?"

"You'll have to answer for it to me. That's all."

"Answer for it to you, be damned!" said Cochran carelessly. He was keeping his temper well in hand. "You're the third officer of this ship, not the master, so you can damned well mind your own business. So can your Mrs. Salvia, and when next you kiss her on the boat-deck you can tell her so with my compliments."

"Stea-dy!" the helpless Rennels breathed, but before the word was well out of his mouth, there was a splinter of glass and half the contents of his cabin was scattered in the track of a spinning human tornado. Harvey had begun it with a blow at the face, under which Cochran, skilled in the tactics of a rough-house, had ducked. Cochran, head down, ran in and grappled.

No great harm was done, in the end. Glanvil had heard the tumult, and his coming had ended the fight. He was angry; he said little to either officer, but Rennels later he examined at length. After that he sent for Mrs. Salvia.

Discipline, *discipline*, the word rang in his head. He had not the least idea of what he was going to say to her nor how, exactly, he could assert his authority. Nothing of the sort had ever troubled him before.

He paced the narrowness of his cabin. Beneath such heat a sane man would have sat still. Glancing sideways as he walked he suddenly perceived in the mirror a reflection of his own figure; a haggard face with sweat glistening in the wrinkles of its forehead; a drawn mouth, and, on the shoulder of the white jacket, a smear of blood: Harvey's.

WHILE he stood debating whether he should change the soiled jacket for fear of shocking his victim, another face appeared in the mirror, behind his shoulder. He gave a jump, for his confused mind identified these shadowy features with those of the Japanese artist's sketch of Elsie Tyrer, that phantasmal cunning evocation of lost desires whose imprint still persisted on its blurred background. Swiftly he focused the apparition, and it became the face of Mrs. Salvia, who had stolen up softly and stood waiting outside the door in the dim alleyway.

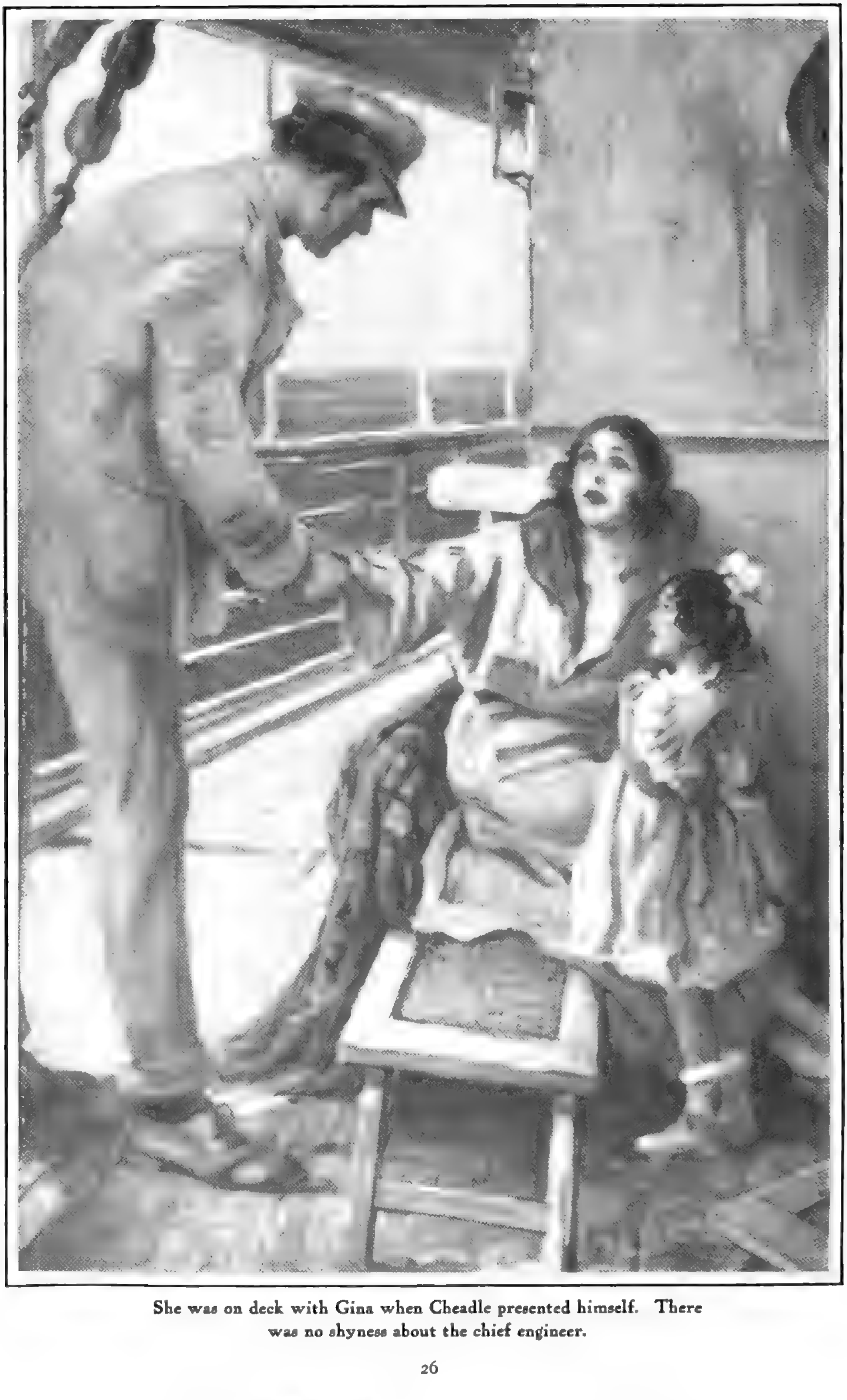
Thrown over her head like a mantilla, the Assiut shawl Harvey had given her concealed her hair and throat, detaching, against its gauzy darkness, the bloodless face that had shocked him by its devastating affinity with that ill-omened portrait. To discover that he was not, after all, the victim of a hallucination, relieved him, but on the heels of this relief came the haunting question that his mistake implied: Was *this* the reason—of everything? He heard a quiet tap at the door.

"Come in," he said without turning, and she entered.

"You wanted me?" she asked, her fingers still on the doorhandle.

"Yes. Please close the door."

Why had he told her to do that, unless it were that he was anxious to isolate her from



She was on deck with Gina when Cheadle presented himself. There was no shyness about the chief engineer.

the setting in which that face had first appeared? A mistake. With an open door he would have been safer. He heard himself speaking harshly. "Please sit down."

She did so, having closed the door behind her. He faced her. Her eyes did not meet his: they were set upon the blood-smeared shoulder of his coat. She went paler and paler. These women! Had some uncanny instinct told her?

"A matter of discipline," he began, the ridiculous word forming itself without volition on his tongue. Her eyes blinked pitifully, as if, for certain, she knew what was coming. She moistened her lips as though an eager question only needed the voice that wouldn't come. His confidence suddenly returned.

"A matter of discipline that concerns you, Mrs. Salvia. I think I made it clear when you came on board, before you came on board, that your presence here must not interfere with the working of the ship. It was a private concession. You had no official status. You understand what I mean?"

The delayed answer, came, almost inaudibly.

"Yes, I understand."

"Very well." He was getting on finely. "Tonight I find that you have been the cause, indirectly, perhaps, of dissension between two of my officers."

Now there was no doubt that she knew what was coming. She clasped her hands; the fingers of one went white with pressure, her eyes blinked with an awful fascination at that red stain. He saw that she was suffering, but this did not inspire him with pity now. However humble she might seem, he wanted to hurt her, there was a smolder of cruelty under his words.

"I must ask you to leave my officers alone," he said. "I don't know how far your intimacy with Mr. Harvey may have gone—"

The white throat reddened. He had succeeded. She rose to her feet suddenly.

"Captain Glanvil—" she began. She was lost for other words, but now her eyes were set full on his. They were like blue ice; ice that can burn with coldness. His blood carried their shivering fire to his feet, to his ears, to his hands, like a ripple of lightning. Without the contact of a finger-tip it was as though a closed current of anger rushed through them, as though, at any instant, the air between might crackle into a white flame. The tension was intolerable. Somehow he must break circuit.

"I beg your pardon," he said in a whisper. "Let us deal with the facts."

He knew that he had failed; his mind was still possessed and tingling; but he forced himself to go on and was amazed at the calm with which his detached voice obeyed him.

"It seems that Mr. Cochran and Mr. Harvey had been discussing you. The second officer was not complimentary or, perhaps, too complimentary. The result was a scene that I can only consider as a disgrace to my command. I am asking for your help—you understand—your help."

His words went weakly away from him. It seemed as if she didn't even hear them, and then, just as he felt that they were lost and must be repeated, she caught their meaning, and astonished him with an abrupt question:

"Nobody hurt?"

HIS mind worked quickly; he was amazed at his own acuteness in realizing that if she had said, "Is he hurt?" he might have answered, "Who?" and driven her to a confession. That was what she would have said if she had been in love with Harvey. What could it matter to him whether she were in love with Harvey or not? He answered her.

"Fortunately, no."

But his hesitation had given her the opportunity for a recovery that she needed. She seemed to pull her strength together, swaying slightly backward like a poised cobra; then, with the swiftness of a flicker of flame, she struck:

"What has this to do with me, Captain Glanvil?"

The unexpectedness of the question, the speed and energy with which it was launched at him, took him aback; he knew there was more behind it.

"To do with you?" he repeated. "That's pretty obvious, isn't it? You are the cause—the unconscious cause, perhaps. Let us be honest. Conscious or unconscious, this sort of situation doesn't arise without encouragement."

"I owe you a great deal, Captain Glanvil," she said rapidly. "But there is no reason why my indebtedness should be taken out in insults. Now we stand square. As for these encouragements of yours—well, you can believe what you like. But I've done nothing—nothing. The second officer—I've hardly spoken to him—behaved like a brute, to Gina. Mr. Harvey, who is the soul of chivalry, took my part. It was necessary that some one should."

SHE paused, breathless with the vehemence of her own scorn.

"Do you think it is easy for a woman to travel alone among a shipful of men, particularly when she's had it hammered into her that she's an object of charity, an embarrassment, a nuisance, a danger? Do you think it's like going on a holiday, a pleasure trip; for the change of air, free of charge? You don't. As a matter of fact you don't think anything. You've never thought. You stand there on the bridge like God, wrapped up in your own self-sufficiency, as you watch your officers hanging round me. You think they're making love to me.

"They're not! They're just trying, poor souls, to get out of me a little of that they miss at sea, the things that belong to a woman, things that no other man can give them. And me giving, giving, giving out of pity and because I must. And all the time that I'm sitting there sewing and talking and smiling under your jealous eyes—jealousy, that's what it really is—my mind— Oh, one can't say it! I mean—I mean that every moment I know that I'm getting nearer, nearer to the biggest crisis of my life, wondering . . .

"Nothing to you, of course. There's no reason why it should be. And I *am* grateful to you; please forget what I said just now; but I've no time, no time for the things that seem to you so awfully important. *They're* nothing to me. I'm absorbed, like a gambler. Everything in my life depends on how my cards turn up at Panda.

"I'm fatalistic; Naples taught me that, but that doesn't lessen the excitement. Either I'm going to be happy—no, not that: I've forgotten long ago what happiness means—either I shall win, or else you might just as well throw me overboard, to the sharks. I'm finished. Do you see?" She laughed dreadfully. "Finished!"

On the last word her body was shaken by a sob; no sound passed her lips, but tears swamped her eyes. She tossed her head as they gathered on her cheek like rain. Glanvil gazed at her; he could not speak. The desperate energy of those clasped hands, of that agonized face, unmanned him. He had never before seen a human creature so transfigured, so fierily possessed. Her nearness scorched him. It was as if her body breathed out all the heat of the burnt sky and the unseen land. Her passion was a solvent within which his will and consciousness were consumed. A haze of heat or tears dimmed his sight and through it gleamed palely the vision that had tortured him before, not by its beauty but by its challenge to some part of himself that he could neither understand nor control, inevitable, unescapable—the face of the woman he loved.

THE revelation staggered him with exultation and dread. Uplifted by an emotion that outsoared the limits of articulate speech, he stretched out his hands. His fingers closed on burning softness of her shoulders; they were so fluent that their substance seemed to escape him, so submissive that she might have been asleep. Her eyes softened, their pupils dilated, they did not see him, but Glanvil's were fixed on her closed lips.

His mind was swept by a desire to press his mouth upon them; thus he might absorb her trouble into his strength and there would be peace; but as his lips approached her face she gave a sigh that was like a shudder and melted away from him. For an incalculable moment they stood solemnly gazing in each other's eyes, amazed and fearful. Then Glanvil stepped deliberately to the door and opened it. And she passed out.

**The second instalment of this gripping sea story, in which Glanvil faces the most dramatic situation of his life, will appear in November** EVERYBODY'S**—out October 15.**

# Dark Red Roses

## *How the Artistically Temperamental Man Acts When He Believes He Has Been Outraged in His Own Home*

### By Stacy Aumonier

'TWIXT sleeping and waking there came to him a moment of quiet exaltation. His consciousness was reveling in the surf of some far distant and yet familiar sea where the sirens whispered:

"You are well. You are happy. You are virile. You have achieved great things, and you will achieve more. You are enveloped in love and beauty and youth."

The sun was creeping between the cracks of the dark blind. Spring. In a short while he would be out in it all. He would grasp it in his hand—love and beauty and youth. He lay there vividly intent upon himself, his environment, his happiness.

Below the window the dew would be sparkling upon daffodils and jonquils, primulas and violets. A starling up in the apple tree was chanting a eulogy of Spring. In the next room—the white door slightly ajar—his wife was sleeping. He could almost see her, curled up in that way she had, like a little round ball, her glorious fair hair scattered over the pillow, her dark eyelashes, her beautiful fair skin, her small mouth firmly shut, just the tilt of that little wilful chin. How he loved her!

In two rooms at the end of the corridor, Mervyn, aged nine, and Diana, aged eleven, were sleeping as only youth can sleep—children of this cloudless love-match. The fulness and the richness of their day was before them, and he possessed it as much as they.

Half dozing, half dreaming, he lay there an infinity of time, absorbed in this sense of happiness . . . he was creating. He saw form, and the beauty of form, and the building of form. He was a sculptor . . .

And then his mind abruptly registered the probable reason of his exultant mood—the letter which had arrived by the last post the previous night, announcing that his model had been accepted by an important corporation in the north. He had received this sought-after commission above all his fellows. The work would take him a year to accomplish, but what a year! His consciousness cleared. He began to work on the details of his undertaking. Technical problems were being faced, the frenzy of creation with its pains, penalties and ecstasies. He would give to the world all that was best in him. Dear life! To be happily married, to have children, to be healthy and virile, and at the age of forty-seven to be recognized as one of the foremost sculptors in the world, was it not enough on this spring morning to work him into a state of fevered anticipation and delight?

"I mustn't think too much of myself, about myself. I don't want it all for myself, it's for the others—the people I love, even the people I don't love. It's all too big, too overpowering to take to oneself. Oh, the glory and the beauty of the world!"

HE RESTRAINED the temptation to get up and rush into the garden until he heard the familiar sound of domestic movements. Then he arose and went into the bathroom. The thrill of cold water down his spine urged him to song, deep-chested and passionate, even if a little out of tune. He rubbed himself down, his eyes glimpsing, not without pride, the fine proportions of his legs and torso. He completed his toilet with care and discretion, and then visited his wife. She was already drinking tea and reading an illustrated paper. He kissed her and exclaimed:

"Well, my darling, sleep well?"

"I always do. You've been making an awful noise in the bathroom."

He laughed tempestuously, teased her a little, discussed the petty arrangements of their daily routine, and then went downstairs to the breakfast room. He always regretted that Denise insisted on having her breakfast in bed. Breakfast was the most glorious meal in the day. The sun poured into the breakfast room. The garden was ablaze with green and white and yellow and red. "Rags," the old sheep dog, bounded to him; buried its nozzle between its master's knees, and peered at him, its sentimental eyes gleaming amid the profusion of shaggy fur.

"Rags, Rags, dear old Rags, what is the day going to bring forth for us? I'm hungry, Rags. What about you?"

But Rags never seemed to be hungry. He seemed quite content to sit at the feet of his master and to feed on the glorious vision. A maid appeared with glittering silver dishes and a coffee urn. A gong sounded. He moved to the side-table and picked up his letters and his newspapers. His interest quickened. The letters, mysteriously intriguing in their uncut state, linking him to friends, and the glamour of his career; the newspapers equally so with the whole cosmic creation. What had the world to tell him today? He stood there happily bemused, turning the letters over.

Then suddenly what a to-do! The children and their governess. He was enveloped in a swirl of pulsating vital forces. Youth consumed with the prescience of a terrific day's program. A terrific business having breakfast, making arrangements, anticipating, discussing. He almost overlooked the important trifles. Just pleased to have him there, happy at seeing father well and happy, but no time for endearments, no time for questions or solicitude. The rabbits had to be fed. George, the gardener, was reputed to have promised to bring along two guinea pigs. A cousin was coming to tea. Mervyn's cricket bat had got to be sent to the makers to be rebound. Diana had to be reproved by the governess for calling Mrs. Weak, the housekeeper, a "silly sausage." There was a picture postcard of Zermatt from Uncle Walter. All terrifically important—breathless. In the midst of it all he laughed loudly in sheer happiness. And the children laughed, too, for no reason—just contagion, and Rags joined in the din.

BREAKFAST was over at last, and he lighted his pipe and went out into the sun. He sat on the bench below the tennis lawn, and looked at the spring flowers, entranced. At the end of the garden the black wooden studio partly concealed by foliage was calling him. He enjoyed the tumult of restraint. There was no hurry. Was he not fully conscious of his powers? Was he not even now, working, creating? A wood-pigeon was cooing in the coppice beyond the vegetable garden. His senses tingled with the thrill of the sweet, pure air, the perfume of wallflowers, the familiar comfort of good tobacco. His mind was working rapidly. Thus and thus would he do to improve upon that model. A curious sense of detachment crept over him, as though he were looking down on himself.

Almost impatiently he arose, and wandered through the grounds, his grounds and —hers. He was consumed with a kind of contemplative lust of possession. He found himself in the white-paneled drawing-room. There indeed could he give his sense of possession full play. Was there ever such a beautiful room? A genuine Queen Anne room with French windows leading on to the lawn. There was the jolly walnut tall-boy which they had bought on their honeymoon, from a dealer in Falmouth. He could almost see Denise now, leaning on his arm. He could hear the tone of her adorable voice:

"Oh, darling! Wouldn't it be lovely to have it?"

It meant a lot in those days. They were very poor when they married. But somehow he managed to buy the tall-boy because Denise wanted it so much. And there it stood to this day. And it had collected around it a company of worthy fellows, a William and Mary cabinet which he bought at a sale in Sevenoaks, a set of original seventeenth-century walnut chairs which he got at Christie's at an appalling price. . . . Things were different now. On the farther wall was his choicest possession—an interior by Pieter de Hoogh in an ebony and tortoiseshell frame. He sank back in an easy-chair and regarded it lovingly. Everything in the room was beautiful from the Pieter de Hoogh to the daffodils in the cut-glass vase on the bureau. Everything was symbolical of the unity of his married state.

He thought of the old days when he had been a poor boy apprenticed to a builder at Nottingham, showing little aptitude or ambition. It was not till he was nearly thirty that he suddenly developed the passion to express in form the strange surgings of his soul. He had saved up money and gone to Italy and studied Donatello. . . . Thirty-five he was when he first met Denise. She seemed a slip of a girl, almost boyish. For a long while he had pondered over the problem of their mutual infatuation. He was twelve years older than she. Would it be right? Could he make her happy? "When I am so-and-so, she will be so-and-so." He envisaged every phase of married state.

Well, well, he had nothing to regret. When they marry, a man may be a little older than a woman. Especially if he keep himself fit, and sane, and temperate. A man has all the advantages. He was hardly conscious of the passing years, except as they added to his spiritual stature. He had mastered his art. He had wrested from the social conflict honor, and fame, and wealth. His love had developed into a finer, richer passion than it had been when he first met her. She was linked to him indissolubly by the ties of children, and the associations of passion and tenderness. O God! How happy, how happy! . . .

They had built this beautiful nest in the Surrey hills. Step by step, piece by piece, their tastes ever in common, every little thing in the house was a symbol of their mutual understanding. And they were surrounded by friends. There was old Morrison, the painter, who lived at "The Seven Gables" across the valley, a wealthy and entertaining old man who frequently came to dine. There were the Stapleys, and the Brontings, and Guy Lewisham, and there was that young violinist, Anton Falk, who had come to live with the Brontings, an engaging and romantic figure. Several evenings a week he would come, and play glorious passages from Bach and Paganini in this very room. And Denise would accompany him. He loved to lie back on the window seat and watch her bending over the keys, the pink glow from the lamp suffusing the beautiful room, the tense, pale face of the young fiddler frowning over his instrument.

He rose again impatiently, driven by an impulse to touch his possessions. He moved from piece to piece, smoking his pipe, and passing his hand affectionately over glossy surfaces. He buried his nose in flowers. There were flowers everywhere, flowers that *she* had gathered and arranged —spring flowers. Then once more he sat back in an easy-chair and sighed contentedly.

THE door opened abruptly, and the room appeared to receive the final note of its ultimate expression. Denise glided in, wearing a frock of thick white lace, and in her hand she carried a bunch of dark red roses, wrapped in that thin paper that florists use. She started slightly at sight of him and exclaimed:

"Hullo, dear! So you're not working then—"

He laughed gaily at her momentary confusion, and at the exquisite vision of her supple movements.

"How clever of you," he said, "to come in at that moment! I was looking at the room. It just wanted that note—the girl in a white frock holding a bunch of dark red roses."

"Aren't they lovely!" she exclaimed, and bent over them.

She removed the paper, crumpled it into a ball and threw it into the paper basket. Then she produced a glass bowl and a pair of scissors. With loving care she arranged the roses, humming to herself as she cut their stalks, and set them in the bowl on the center table. His eyes caressed her every movement. When she had completed her task she went across to him and sat on the arm of his chair.

"Don't they look lovely!" she murmured.

"Yes," he said. "They are exquisite—almost exotic. It is early for roses."

She sighed as though a little impatient of his plaint.

"They must come from abroad," he ruminated. "Or perhaps bred under glass. We do not get such roses here till June."

"They come from Stooles, the florist's," she explained, fluttering toward the window like a little bird restless for flight.

"Davy," she suddenly added, "is it quite easy to take a cast of any one's hands?"

"Yes, quite easy."

"I thought it would be rather jolly to have a cast of Anton's hands. Have you ever noticed what beautiful hands he has?"

"Yes, they are beautiful hands."

"There's something romantic about the hands of a musician, something one would like to preserve. He is coming this evening. Do you think you could spare time?"

"Why, of course! It would take less than an hour of my valuable time. You shall have a cast of your fiddler's hands, my dear."

"Thanks so much, Davy."

The little bird fluttered through the French window and down into the garden. But the man continued to sit there, intent on his happiness and the serene beauty of the room. The dark red roses produced in the artist in him a queer emotion. They were extraordinarily beautiful, and yet they left upon him a slight impression of disquiet. The room was no longer so serene or tranquil. They were a note of luxury and defiance. In the fulness of their blooming two petals had already dropped, and lay upon the dark table like little pools of blood. It was the season for daffodils and primroses, the virgin flowers which herald in the spring, but these spoke of warm summer nights or southern climes.

"It is early in the year for roses."

Very slowly he rose, and walked toward them. The richness of their perfume assailed his nostrils. Much as he loved them, they jarred his sensibilities, like a perversion or a wanton feast. He turned away, and went as though driven by some subconscious force to the waste-paper basket. With quiet deliberation he unfolded the paper they had been wrapped in. A piece of card had apparently escaped his wife's detection. He picked it up and read it. On it was scribbled in pencil, "To my darling." There was no signature. Guiltily he tore it up, and returned it and the paper to the basket.

THAT morning he worked with the fury of creation. With long strides he reached his studio. His hands clutched and fashioned great masses of clay. Forms emerged from chaos, forms expressing beauty and humility. So engrossed was he with his new concepts that he did not return to the house for lunch. He sent his assistant over for a tray of food, which he devoured savagely, standing by his model all the while, like a mother fearful of some treacherous attack upon her child.

Sometimes the laughter of the children, playing in the garden, reached him, and once he heard his wife singing. . . . The long day drew on. At six o'clock his assistant left. A little later there was a tap at the door, and it opened before he had time to say, "Come in."

Denise came gaily in, followed by the young man.

"Here's Anton, dear. Are you very, very busy?"

Her eyes were sparkling with the love of life. The young man was grave and deferential.

"Very, very busy. How are you, Anton?"

"What about those hands, David?"

"Ah, yes, I had forgotten. Those hands—let me see them, Anton."

The young man held out his long delicate fingers.

"Yes, they are indeed beautiful hands, beautifully proportioned. The fingers long and tapering, the tips slightly flattened. Beautiful hands. I will take a cast of them. But you must excuse me for the moment. I have something to finish. Anton will stay to dinner. Afterward we will have a little music, perhaps? And then I will take a cast of Anton's hands."

"You mustn't work too hard, Davy. You haven't left the studio since ten o'clock this morning. You'll be knocking yourself up."

"Thank you for your solicitude. I'm feeling remarkably robust. Now run away and play, children."

Any feeling of constraint which might have marred the dinner party that evening was dissipated by the arrival of Denise's mother, a dear old lady who was extremely garrulous and amusing. As a matter of fact the dinner was unusually merry. Denise was in the highest spirits, and David talkative and reminiscent. Only the young man seemed self-conscious and reserved, plainly anxious for the meal to end. But if his tongue was silent, he was sufficiently eloquent with his eyes.

The music that followed was not a success. Anton was obviously not in the mood, and Denise was apt to be frivolous. The old mother acknowledged frankly that classical music bored her. David was restless and eager to consummate his preconceived purposes.

During a pause he arose abruptly and said:

"Come! I'm afraid we must terminate this concert if I am to take a cast of Anton's hands tonight."

"Why, yes!" exclaimed Denise. "I was forgetting all about it. Shall we all go over to the studio?"

"No." David was emphatic. "You stay here with your mother. Anton and I will go over there alone."

He almost relished the tinge of disappointment which flickered at the back of his wife's eyes. Out in the hall he said:

"Put on your hat and coat, Anton. These April evenings are treacherous."

They walked the length of the dark garden and entered the studio. David switched on the light.

"I shall not detain you long," he said. "The process is quite simple. Here is a bowl of sweet oil. Will you please dip your hands in it, and get them thoroughly saturated?"

ANTON did as he was bidden while the elder man prepared a mixture of plaster of Paris and water.

"Does it take long to set?" asked the violinist, advancing to the bench where David was at work. He was holding out his oily hands.

"Oh, no! Two or three minutes at the outside. But it is very necessary to keep the hands quite still. Now, lay them face downward on this plaster bed. So!"

He covered up the young man's hands with the cold wet plaster. Then he continued:

"I have been handling plaster all my life. It is treacherous stuff, shifting, unstable, unreliable—not unlike human nature. In a case like this we usually use irons to keep it from shifting. Allow me."

He passed the iron bands over the pool of plaster and bolted it down into the bench.

"Does it feel cold?"

"It's not too bad, Mr. Cardew. Will you explain the process to me?"

"With pleasure. We leave your hands there for a few moments till the plaster sets. Then we remove the irons, and you will be able to withdraw your hands quite easily. There remains then what we call a mold. This I fill with more plaster mixed with soap and oil. I leave this to set. I then chip away the outer mold and we arrive at the completed cast. Quite simple and painless, you see. Denise was most anxious to have a cast of your beautiful hands."

He laughed a little recklessly as he uttered the last sentence in a cold incisive voice, and then he lighted his pipe. The seconds ticked by, and neither man spoke. At the end of two minutes Anton said:

"I think the plaster has set, Mr. Cardew. It feels like it."

David Cardew was perched on a high stool. He looked thoughtfully into the bowl of his pipe. In passionless accents he suddenly remarked:

"Dark red roses do not grow in April."

The young man looked up at him quickly.

"Dark red roses?"

"Nature makes laws, and men make codes. It's all very much the same—the struggle for survival. Nature is cruel and relentless, man less so. He does not want to set up these codes. He is forced to do so. It is a blind subconscious force not so much for the protection of the individual as for the preservation of the type. We have our English saying, 'It isn't done.' It sounds inane and foolish and conventional, but in effect it is quite a sound dogma, founded on experience and tradition. It isn't done, Anton Falk."

The young man gave him a quick glance and shifted his position.

"Why do you say all this to me, Mr. Cardew?"

"Dark red roses in April—an exotic fancy! This is the time of year when the hedgerows are alive with little innocent buds, when the birds are mating, and youth and purity are at the helm. The flowers of darker passions are out of place. As a fellow artist you will appreciate this point of view, I'm sure."

The young man gave a sudden scared look and made a violent movement with his wrists.

"If you had the strength of ten men you could not draw your hands from that mold, Mr. Falk."

The two men then looked full into each other's eyes, and both understood. Anton's face was the color of the plaster which incased his hands.

"WHAT are you saying, Mr. Cardew?" he said breathlessly. "What are you implying? It's all false, I swear. My God! What are you going to do?"

This latter query was caused by David Cardew's sudden action. He had reached out and taken down from the wall a Japanese sword in a carved ivory scabbard. Almost languidly he drew the sword and remarked:

"An interesting old sword, this. It was given me by an American print collector, who brought it from Japan. It belonged to a famous Samurai. Wonderful people the Samurai, with a code of honor and morality that has never been surpassed. It is said that three people have already died by his sword—the wife, the lover, and then the man himself. Rather drastic, you may say. In these days we should think it sufficient to kill the lover."

The young man, who was hanging limply by his hands, suddenly uttered a cry of terror.

"My God! You're mad, Mr. Cardew. Help! help!"

"They won't hear you in the house. The walls are thick, and the wind is stirring in the trees."

"Don't talk like this. It's all false, I tell you. I know what you think, but it isn't true. I'm not your wife's lover."

The older man laughed cynically, and muttered:

"Dark red roses in the spring."

"I'm fond of your wife, very fond, but there's nothing else, I swear. I've never—Oh, for God's sake release my hands!"

"Very fond, very fond. Yes, yes, yes."

Suddenly the tones of his voice changed. He went up to his captive and said savagely:

"I'm not going to kill you. It isn't done. Only listen to me: killing is not the only thing that isn't done. Do you understand me? I told you to bring your hat and coat because the April nights are treacherous. The reason is that when I release you, you will take the path through the vegetable garden and drop down into Hood's Lane. You will go right away and never darken my doors again. Do you understand that? Do you promise that? or would you prefer to die?"

Hanging inert against the bench the young man whispered:

"Yes, I promise. But it's all false—it's all false—"

"I want no lies, no protestations."

He sheathed the sword, and replaced it on the wall. He was trembling all over when he unbolted the iron bands. Controlling his passion, he managed to say in a calm voice:

"Steady, now, steady, Mr. Falk. Withdraw your hands carefully. I must finish my work. Denise will be distressed if she does not have the cast of the beautiful hands of the young violinist. There! That's it, so. In the corner you will find a sink and some soap. You may wash your hands. I'm afraid they're badly soiled. Then I will see you into the lane."

THE young man was completely unnerved. He withdrew his hands and staggered toward the sink. He washed and wiped them on a towel, but he was careful never to turn his back on his late captor. He watched him furtively, prepared for flight. But David Cardew appeared already preoccupied. His eyes were solemnly regarding the mold. There was nothing more to say on either side. When he had put on his hat and coat, both men went silently out. David led the way through the vegetable garden. At the end of it, he opened a gate that led into the lane.

"You know your way, I think," was all he said, and the other replied, "Yes." They parted without salutation, and Cardew returned to the studio.

His emotions were in a state of riot. He could neither focus nor decide upon his next actions. Youth, and beauty, and love—shop-worn! Savagely he chipped away at the outer mold. One sardonic desire pressed itself upon him.

"She shall have the beautiful white hands of her lover."

What was he going to do? How far was she involved? Could she possibly love this man?

"He won't come back, anyway. I've frightened the life out of him. Spineless wretch!"

A few hours ago his happiness had been

unbelievable. And now—could it all be destroyed so easily? Could all the associations of love, and passion, and tenderness be suddenly uprooted? No, no, no, a thousand times no. She *had* loved him. Of that there was not a shadow of doubt. This must be some mad spring infatuation. It would pass. He would go to her. There would be a little scene, and then she would weep on his breast, and he would forgive her. And oh! he would be so gentle, and forgiving, and loving, and she would fall asleep at last in his arms, like the little child she was. A kind of fierce pride surged through him when he thought how forgiving he would be. He completed the cast of the fiddler's hands. There they were, the beautiful long, tapering fingers with the slightly flat tips. He restrained the desire to hurl them to the ground. He had promised them to Denise. It would be a dramatic and potent way of starting their little scene. He would say:

"Look! Here are the white hands of your lover. Shake them. They have come to say good-by."

And Denise would give a little scream, and throw herself on the bed. He hated the thought of hurting her, but the position had got to be faced. The nettle had got to be gripped before its stalk became too strong.

He wrapped the plaster hands in paper, shut up the studio, and went stealthily toward the house. A light was burning in the library. He hoped the mother had gone to bed. He would feign exhaustion and suggest that they go up at once. The bedroom was essentially the place for their little scene. He entered the hall noiselessly. To his disappointment he heard the voice of his wife's mother in the library. A sudden idea occurred to him. Perhaps Denise had already confessed; perhaps she was confessing even now. He tiptoed toward the door, which was ajar. He pushed it quietly open another two inches, and stood there listening, holding the plaster cast in his hand.

And this is what he heard—his wife's voice speaking cheerily:

"Oh, mother darling, I forgot all about thanking you for those lovely dark red roses you sent me from Stoole's."

The mother's voice: "Oh, my dear, my dear! Don't be absurd. As though I should forget."

His wife's voice again: "Do you know, darling, isn't it a scream! But Davy *did* forget. He was so taken up with his silly old commission that he forgot all about my birthday! Isn't it too funny! Mother darling, don't remind him. He would be so upset, the poor dear!"

David Cardew fumbled his way through the door, but so agitated was he that he dropped the plaster cast on the parquet floor and it smashed to smithereens.

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# Nightfall

## By Mary Stewart Cutting

THE dusk is growing, and the shortened fields
  No longer reach the glimmering lights of town;
The forward urgency of daytime yields
  To the dark barriers night is drawing down,
And I can hear the distant ocean's roar
Upon Old Age's solitary shore.

Though I should have no boon of Life again,
  I could not question, I could not repine;
I have had all Love's joy, if all its pain—
  No gladness, and small grief, but have been mine.
These are twin gifts which Love must always bear,
Naught would I have foregone of all Love's share!

*Everybody's Magazine, October, 1924*

*A Complete Novelette*

# Fifty Miles *from* Nowhere

### *They Met on the Irish Coast—A Good Place for a Shindy—These Two Old Friends, and It Was a Lively One That Followed*

### By W. Lee Dickson

**Illustration by H. T. Fisk**

IN THE Dublin railway station, on a certain October afternoon, stood a sandy-haired youth, tall and a trifle too thin. An abraded army coat told his recent activities. From one hand sagged a great, worn bag, bulging and scarred. The other hand held a banjo, its case in disreputable condition. These, with some three pounds, odd shillings, constituted the entire estate, real or personal, of Jerry Martin, American, newest recruit of an important cable company, bound via Farranfore and Cahirciveen for its station on Ballinskellig's Bay, southwest Ireland.

While Jerry waits for the Tralee Express, a brief biographical sketch is pertinent. His father and mother had died when he was a child. His entire legacy was sound health. A garrulous aunt, in Cleveland, in medium circumstances, unwillingly assumed the responsibility of housing and feeding him; scolding him off to school and nagging him to his meals. This lady, with pious resignation, referred to him as "my burden—carrying my poor dead sister's cross for her." He had gone to work at fifteen, and contributed to his aunt nearly his total earnings—eight dollars weekly. She accepted it in a casual, belittling manner, although she did not need the money: "But God knows it's only fair he should pay me something after the years and years I've—"

At nineteen, the drabness of office routine and the garrulity of his aunt seemed fixed as eternal things. Then the Great War, remote and unreal in its first years, came close. The war made the break easy—essential.

A wounded leg, long in mending, definitely took him from the insanity of the trenches. But he wanted to stay on with the armies—in Europe—part of this flaming picture. In the hospital a comrade suggested telegraphy, and he seized upon it, practising with a "ticker" and battery mounted on a board.

There was a nurse, an English girl, very young and almost very pretty. She had wheeled him about the grounds. When his leg was very painful, she had stroked his hair with cool fingers and told him not to mind, and called him a hero. In those hours her presence had been peculiarly soothing; and her voice had awakened a strange, new melancholy which, with vague excitements, worked within him—puzzling and poignant. He had called her Jo, as had other adoring casuals.

His discharge from the hospital, and consequent transfer to a branch of the Signal Corps well behind the lines, took place when she was on leave. Awkwardly enough, he had not even left a note for her.

He served as a telegraph operator until the Armistice, and after. Then worn but joyous men chattered madly of going

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home—*home!* Jerry had no desire to go home. He had climbed from his rut for the war and had discovered the world. He had found it a thrilling and colorful sequence of surprises. He had smelled powder and death, seen horrible and beautiful things, and learned to laugh when little cause there was for laughter. And Jo. Home? He could understand it for those with fine and cozy things waiting; but for him: the garrulous aunt, a job.

HIS request to remain with the Army of Occupation was granted. He continued at the Morse key. There were excursions into the Rhine country, broadening friendships. There were his banjo and numberless ditties. Jerry was popular, with officers and men.

Then the army packed its new wives, its excessive belongings acquired with American dollars, and sailed for home, unit by unit. When the last were ordered home, Jerry Martin worked a discharge, bade lingering farewells to his pals and—went to London. There he played, basking in the joy of his first unbounded freedom. There were sight-seeing, theaters, and a wealth of thrills. Sometimes he found himself looking for Jo in the crowds that surged past, and wondering about her, wondering profitlessly. The startlingly sudden end of his funds faced him with the necessity of doing something—and at once. Thus it was that he wandered into the cable company. They needed a man for Ireland. That sounded interesting. He signed for twelve pounds a month, wrote his aunt of his new vocation, and proceeded to Dublin.

The ride to Farranfore, in the Tralee Express, was four hours of window-peering. It was very fine and luxurious, at the company's expense. But at Farranfore all luxury was left behind. A branch line, moribund, single-track, held three ancient and dirty wooden coaches which a fussy little engine promised to jerk to Cahirciveen—twelve Irish miles, by cart, from the station.

Jerry and his possessions occupied one of the stiff, wooden seats in a third-class car. A few peasants, sullen and not too clean, were his companions. The fine express glided on. Jerry's train lurched, groaned and bumped the beginning of its tortuous four-hour journey. The creaking cars snailed past villages and into the barren country of low hills. After three hours, the depression of southwest Ireland's unfertile desolation began to damp those spirits so recently kindled in London. Jerry turned to an unshaved farmer. "Is it all like this, down here?" he asked.

"Like what?"

"Why—like this: you know—bare—" He stopped, fearful of antagonizing a native son. He had learned this caution in France, in Germany, and in England.

"Where're ye goin'?" the Celt queried.

"To the cable station, on Ballinskellig's Bay," Jerry told him.

The farmer snorted. "The cable station, is it?" Never been there?"

"Never."

He snorted again, and spat outrageously in the aisle. "Well, if ye'll be callin' this 'bare,' wait till ye see that Ballinskellig's Bay country. Of all the God-forsaken places—it's, as they say, fifty miles from nowhere. 'Tis then so!"

"WHERE the blind, white sea-snakes crawl" crawl the cables. From man's earth, through the ooze and over the mountains of the ocean's bottom, through eternal blackness of the sea-world, to man's earth again—untiring, cold, mysterious, without sound or motion—they bear his manifold messages.

Twelve miles from Cahirciveen one turns to the right, to the shore of Ballinskellig's Bay, and the cable station. A few hundred yards from and facing the bay is the office—a large rectangular building which houses the operating-room, with its orderly array of sending and receiving machines; the terminals for Morse lines to England; a mechanicians' shop and battery room. The cables never rest. There are ninety operators—thirty men for each eight hours of every day—supervisors and mechanics, ever watchful, ever busy.

To the right of this building are the "married men's houses"—squat little dwellings furnished by the company. Farther on is the mess-hall for single men, and then their quarters—a building of small rooms and meager furnishings. Adjoining this, the superintendent's ("Old Man's") house. Inland of these buildings is an open field for sports—cherished recreations of the men. On three sides of this lonely group are bogs, backed by bleak, heather-covered hills. Gray desolation, unchanging, barren, cheerless as the bay itself: a treacherous water beyond low shingle cliffs, condemned by Lloyd's for all shipping.

The buildings were damp and chill from the all-too-common downpour that beat its familiar tattoo on the roofs. In the mess-hall, smoke-filled and humid, the off-duty men cursed the weather, played cards, and exchanged colorful rumors of the Republican insurgents taking the unguarded station as a blow at the new Free State. The operators were largely British and Scotch. They discussed the Republican-Free State ferment in a detached and cautious manner with their Irish comrades. There was no gasconading here. There were rumors—that was all; and the chief concern of the men was what danger the situation held for them personally—or what welcome excitement.

An ancient and toneless piano was being tortured into an abortive rendition of "My Old Dutch." A few of the vocally inclined were adding to its din. Lonely men, working hard to forget their loneliness.

Near a window sat Napoleon (on the company's books, however, as Harry Sykes). Napoleon: and the little cockney's anomalous appellation pleased him no end. Lacking any clear conception of the history or manner of the illustrious one whose name he bore, he nevertheless endeavored to give cause for the continuance of the honor by cultivating a lock of red hair to hang over his forehead, and by thrusting one hand under his coat and over his heart, when speaking. In this he had been coached and encouraged by a devoted roommate whose highest praise was: "Blimy! when ya stahnd that wye, yer 'air over yer tem-pul, an' yer 'and over yer 'eart, Napolyun's aown mother wouldn't know ya apart, or I'm a blinkin' bew-gler!" Whereupon Napoleon would reply: "Aw, yer fyce is full o' talk!" But he always added, hopefully: "Hi don't now—word of honor, do I?"

In customary attitude he sat, beguiling the time by casting good-natured insults in the direction of the piano, to the joy of all within earshot. "Hi never before knew that deafness was a blessin'! 'Ow's the chawnces of 'avin' some mew-sic in plyce of that noise barrage?" And so on. Suddenly he turned to the window, pressed his face against the steaming pane and then rose with a cry. "Lads! Hit's the new un! 'E's come all the wye from Cahirciveen in the ryne! Ouch! Wot's that? Bless me 'eart, look! 'E's got a fiddle or a bahnjo!"

THEY opened the door and peered out. In the downpour and mud stood a "jaunty"—the little side-seated Irish cart that serves all travelers on the road from Cahirciveen. Horse, driver, passenger and luggage were drenched. Jerry paid the fare, turned, and trudged into the smoky light of the waiting room. Rain dripped from his chin, his ears, his hands. He blinked and grinned through his confusion, shook himself, dog-like, and dropped the bag and banjo to the floor. Napoleon was the first to grasp his surprised hand. "Welcome to the stytion, lad! M' nyme's Sykes—but just call me Napolyun. Wot's yours?"

Jerry told them; and the telling disclosed his nationality, confirmed by the coat he wore. "He's a Yank!" some one called; and the designation clung.

Where, as at this station, a small company of men are by virtue of their work insulated from the world, the departure of an old member is second only in importance to the arrival of a new. In the former case, the loss—or gain, if he was disliked—is a known quantity. In the latter, the interest is highly flavored by the uncertainty of the newcomer's qualities. Will he be a grouch? Will he be lazy, or help in the sports? Married or single? Great speculation and swift appraisal attend his first moments among them. But if—*if* he plays a banjo, we'll say, this is his ticket to immediate popularity. Other things can wait. If he can play and sing to them, cause enough to be glad of his coming. And the men are seldom wrong in the light of later analysis; for it seems that those who play and sing to their lonely leisure prove equally good companions in work.

Jerry, then, was accepted: first, on his banjo; second, on the honest smile that accompanied all his replies to their eager questionings. He was taken to the quarters adjoining, to a room—his room—and they helped him into dry clothes. Then a group headed by Napoleon, who carried the precious instrument, escorted him back to the mess-hall, where the little cockney announced: "Lads! Our new friend, Mr. Yank Mahtin, 'as koindly consented to ply and sing a few of 'is nytive ditties. Hintroducin' Mr. Yank Mahtin formerly of the U-nited Stytes Harmy, an' now of this stytion, God 'elp 'im!"

There were cheers and a din of pounding and clapping. Jerry, inured to such audiences in the army, and knowing the futility of declining, perched grinning on a table, tuning up. The men bent forward, silent, hopeful. So still they were that the light, opening chords had a steady, muffled bass in the rain that beat unceasingly without. Then Jerry sang, easily, confidently, pleasingly, a "mammy" song of Broadway, three years old.

The last fear of the last doubter was dispelled before the final chord. The men burst into uncontrolled cheering. Here was one they had always needed! They swarmed about him; and a dozen requests for this and that favorite mingled with their praises. He sang again—then again, as their enthusiasm mounted: army ditties, and they laughed; songs of the Mason-Dixon line, and they listened, rapt. Midnight passed. They made him repeat "On the Road to Mandalay" and lustily joined in the choruses.

They were rollicking through the last chorus when the door sprung open, shocking them into silence, and a tall, keen figure in oilskins stood glowering on the threshold. The intruder, one hand on the door, had already singled out Jerry, whose banjo dropped to his knees, and in whose ears rang premonitory whispers: "The Old Man!"

The superintendent strode into the room. "Who," he demanded, "are the midnight relief?" Twenty-odd operators rose diffidently, abashed. "Then why in hell aren't you in the office?" he rasped. There was a scurrying and much consulting of watches. The newcomer interrupted. "No need of that! It's twelve-twenty. The married men relieve on time; you fellows seem to think—"

The diatribe was drowned by the guilty ones crowding out into the rain, breaking into a run for the office. A voice, richly cockney, called back from the road: "We're bloomin' naughty boys, eyen't we, teacher dear?" Then some highly profane advice; and laughter died with their footsteps.

Those remaining kept silence, awaiting the scene they knew must follow. They were not disappointed. Stepping up to Jerry, Mr. Jessup blared: "And who the devil are *you?*"

Jerry smiled. "Jerome Martin, sir."

"What're you doing here?"

"I'm a new operator, sir."

Mr. Jessup knew the dramatic value of a pause. He contemplated the banjo, wagged his head, looked Jerry up and down; then, with fine sarcasm: "So you're the new operator! Well, well! You seem more like a music-hall entertainer, Mr. Martin. You see, it's a custom for new men to present their papers and be assigned to duty before they delay the regulars from their work." He added sharply, "Report to me in the morning!" and was gone.

There were sympathy for Jerry, slaps on the back, and the information that the Old Man was a thundering grouch, a glutton for discipline. There was assurance that his ire would abate by morning and, on the strength of it, requests for more entertaining. But Jerry declined. The song had been taken out of him, or he was very tired. He said he thought he'd "just turn in," and went next door and climbed to his room.

This chamber was small and nearly bare. An iron cot, a chair and a table were its furnishings. One window, heavy with rain, looked off to the bay and the sea beyond. Jerry tried to peer out into the teeming darkness, but it was useless.

He opened the window, switched off the light, and climbed into bed. Rain, unceasing rain; and beyond and through it the monotonous, empty cadence of surf—somewhere; and somewhere else the dismal, measured croak of a foghorn: an untiring trio sounding a minor chord of loneliness. Jerry pulled the coverlet over his head. There were thoughts of his aunt; memories of those wonderful days in London; then sleep—and cool fingers that stroked his hair in the grounds of a certain hospital.

JERRY was roused by a determined bang on his door, which concurrently swung open. He blinked over the edge of his covers to behold a stocky individual, somewhere in his officious thirties, standing at the foot of his bed: the bellicose Hornby. His outstanding characteristics were a cap, very partial to his left ear, and a mouth completely filled and occupied with gum. Gum-chewing was never an English trait; but some there were who learned it during the war. This man, mused Jerry, must certainly be its most enthusiastic convert. Surveying Jerry, Hornby's little eyes narrowed nearly to closing, as though blinded by this luxurious lolling. The Sybarite smiled through a yawn. "Er—g'morning! Who're you?"

An unpleasant voice struggled through the chewing processes. "I'm *Mr.* Hornby, chief supervisor. You should have turned out an hour ago; Mr. Jessup's been waiting for you to report. We haven't even seen your papers yet. For a man that was in the army, as they tell me you were, you ought to know—"

"Oh, say! Hornby—" Jerry began, sitting up.

"*Mr.* Hornby to you! I'm next to Mr. Jessup here and I rate that. Now, you're starting wrong, young fellow. You won't have time to eat now: it's seven-thirty. Get into your clothes and relieve on the London Morse at eight."

"How about seeing the Old Man? He told me—"

"If you mean Mr. Jessup, you'll have time enough to see him! Give me your papers and I'll tell him you were asleep."

Jerry felt reasonably sure that he would. He produced his papers. Hornby glanced through them briefly, turned and departed.

A bar of chocolate served as breakfast; and Jerry marched out into the morning, dull and wet from the night's rain. He glimpsed the bay, leaden and ugly, restive under the low cliffs. His leg bothered him a bit in wet weather, and he limped ever so slightly. He looked toward the Cahirciveen road, inundated, deserted. "A nice, cheerful little place, Mr. Martin," he told himself, and reported at the office with the new relief. Friends of the night before introduced him effusively to men he hadn't met. They were a good crowd, Jerry pondered. But his lot at the station, or his hope of transfer, was in the hands of the omnipotent Jessup and Hornby. And these had promised to be chary enough of favors.

A telegraph key is just that, no matter where it is; and coded messages are just as meaningless in Ireland as in France. There was, however, this difference: here there was no respite. The incoming cables were piled before him faster than he could relay them. Hornby hovered near his chair. When the men were relieved for lunch, there was no relief for Jerry. This was seen to by Hornby. There was a hollow explanation about wanting him to "get used to the key." The last two hours were a trial. He was very hungry, and his arm and fingers ached; but any slackening elicited a grunt through the furious munching behind him. He carried on until the four o'clock men took up the burden. Rising—rather weak, but smiling—he confronted Hornby. "How did I do, sir?" The reply, as nearly as Jerry could judge, was "Gr-m-m"; but it was not reproval, so his work must have been good. He knew the Hornby type: there had been top-sergeants.

The thought of food was paramount. He was being directed, when a gentle person passing middle age came out of the crowd and extended his hand. "My boy," said this man, "my name is Disbrow. The men told me about you; last night, I mean." He smiled. "That was too bad, but Mr. Jessup is that way. I wish you'd come over to my little place. My wife will find something for you. Won't you come, please?"

THE man's smile were repressed and sad. His eyes were palpably honest. His invitation was tinged with something of longing to have Jerry accompany him. When Jerry consented, his face lighted and he said, "Oh, fine, fine!" and eagerly took the boy's arm.

He lived in one of the standard little houses allotted men with wives. He urged Jerry into the one comfortable chair in the living-room cluttered with books and cheap ornaments. He pushed some cigarettes at him, then left the room. Voices came from what must have been the kitchen. Then Disbrow returned, and drew up a chair, facing him.

"Mrs. Disbrow will have something for you right away. Tell me, son: what part of the States are you from?"

"Cleveland, Ohio," Jerry told him. "Do you know anything about America?"

Disbrow smiled and looked away: the weary smile and far look of somber retrospection. Slowly he said: "I was born and raised in Maryland."

Jerry impulsively grasped the older man's hand. "Say!" he cried. "We're the only Yankees on the ground! We'll have to stick together, eh?"

Disbrow's eyes were suddenly moist; and as suddenly he determined on saying something. He placed one hand on Jerry's shoulder. "No," he said; "we'll not stick together, Martin. You've got to get out of here as fast as you can."

This was uttered so calmly that Jerry looked at him, groping. "I—I don't understand, sir—"

"I mean that you shall—and now. You're young; and at your age youth seems an immortal thing; endless years seem to lie ahead. You haven't found yourself yet. Very well. But get out of the cables before you grow accustomed to the job, get lazy in it, and start the putting-off process. It only takes a little while; I *know!* I'm one who joined 'for a little while, to see the world.' But year after year I put off getting out. It's lazy work, this, and these God-forsaken stations—they're all alike—are soul-devouring. The routine shackles your mind as it does your body. Like many others, I married—a native girl, here. Loneliness, my boy—ah, well, never mind that. But look at *me*, Martin. I'm well born, I'm well read; but I'm not a damned bit better than one of those receiving-machines! It's too late now; I don't know anything else. But you—you put in your resignation. Get out!"

The man's intensity, one hand gripping Jerry's knee till it pained him, left him speechless.

A new depression came upon him after leaving the house. He went to his room and gazed out on the bay. Could he, too, fall in that rut? Would he some day be as old as Disbrow? There was sudden desire to leave this place, to desert, to find work, any kind, anywhere but here. Feeling himself sinking, he turned to an unfailing source of cheer—the banjo. But not here; it would bring a crowd upon him, and he wanted to be alone.

The afternoon had cleared, and a dull sun was pendent over the sea. He went out, case in hand, away from the buildings to the shore, and along the edge of the bay. The massive hills that walled the station were grimly beautiful in the fading October light; but they were walls, imprisoning, austere. Disbrow's words still rung in his ears. He walked to where a hog's-back projected into the water. Its farther side was sloping, forming a ledge hidden from the buildings, facing the sea. Beyond—somewhere—America; all his "buddies"; opportunities; New York, that he had never seen. He sat on a rock, propped himself against another, and strummed familiar chords. Then, inappropriately enough, he sang "I've been working on the railroad." He laughed when he realized it might be months before he'd even see a railroad. But he was cheered by his own song and repeated it, embellished with certain distracting harmonies. He finished with the inevitable "And she lives down in our al-lee!" of the army. He felt much better. He was about to continue this curl when a voice, startlingly near and terribly unexpected, said: "That's ripping, Jerry. Didn't know you could do it!"

He turned; then bounded to his feet. One word escaped his lips: "Jo!" And then, almost a cry, "Jo!"

SHE stood on a rock just above him, a picture of radiant twenty, clear-eyed and laughing. A gentle breeze ruffled the blue dress she wore and lifted the front of a drooping blue hat from her face. She was bewitching on these rocks as any siren who lured Ulysses. She was, indeed, less real to Jerry. He looked—as she always and tenderly remembered it—consummately foolish.

She stepped down to him, both hands extended. "Jerry!" she said. "Oh, I *am* glad to see you!"

"Lord!" he began; then: "I didn't expect to—to see *you*, Jo!"

"You've never even thought of me! You didn't even say good-by, at the hospital."

"Oh, say, now!" he objected. "You were on leave. And I *have* thought of you, Jo—honestly I have."

The woman of her: "When did you think of me?"

"Why—why, lots of times; only last night—"

She rescued him. "Tell me about yourself. How's the bad leg? And what on earth are you doing here?"

He told her; briefly, naïvely. She listened, nodding encouragement. When he finished, he looked at her again, and a sudden fear struck within him. Was she in one of those Disbrow houses? "Jo," he said quickly, "Jo, you aren't—married—or anything, are you?" His expression made her laugh; and the laugh dispelled his fears. Then they both laughed—rather foolishly and long.

His thoughts raced ahead; out and past the loneliness that had been this place, to the hope of hours with Jo. Jo refound! Here was a new station, on a new bay, in a new world! Boyishly he asked: "Can't I see you—say, this evening, Jo?" Her face clouded, her lips compressed, and slowly she shook her head. Unguardedly he pressed, "Why?" Then frankly she told him.

"Jerry, I'd just better out with it now. Father's the superintendent here, you know—"

Jerry gasped. "Mr. *Jessup?*"

"Why, didn't you know?" she said. "But of course, how could you? You never knew my last name. But you needn't look so horrified about it, Jerry. Well, father's a bit peculiar about allowing the operators to come to the house, and—please don't be hurt—he doesn't like me to see them—ever. It's not being unkind; it's just discipline, he says."

Mr. Jessup—the Old Man! Jerry looked across the darkening water. "I think I see," he said unhappily. Aladdin had snatched back his lamp.

She put out one hand, instinctively to touch him; but drew it back. "Jerry," she said, "if you take my advice, you won't stay here, at the cables. You'll get out." There it was again. He turned rather churlishly. "I've heard that before," he said. "Perhaps I will!"

When next she spoke her voice was as he remembered it, at the hospital: gentle, but commanding. "Jerry Martin, look at me." He obeyed with something of pouting. "Jerry, I told you I'm glad you came, and I am—more than you know. Do you really want to see me?"

"Jo!" His face and one gesture made the syllable eloquent.

"Then you shall," she told him. He bent toward her, already committed to any conspiracy, any risk. "Down here, afternoons, like this. I—I always stroll down this way anyhow, and—and I want to talk to you, Jerry. I—I'm not very happy," she added, unguardedly.

Clumsily, he would have asked questions. She sensed this and rose quickly, giving him both her hands again. "And tomorrow you must play for me, please. Tomorrow, Jerry."

He watched her disappear beyond the ledge.

As he tramped back to the station, a confusion of emotions possessed him—made him giddy. As to finding Jo again—and here of all places!—it brought poignant realization that he had never ceased looking for her. But Jo as Miss Jessup, daughter of Old Man Jessup, and her use of Disbrow's very words, her hint of unhappiness—these were too much to digest on top of the surprise of finding her. The very buildings seemed changed; everything seemed changed.

He went through mess in a polite daze.

THE bellicose Hornby, ubiquitous as trouble, and closely affiliated with it in Jerry's mind, stopped him in the shadow, outside the mess-hall, on his way to his room. "A word with you, Martin!" was the beginning, through unrelenting chews, and the tone promised unpleasantness, a promise which Hornby fulfilled immediately. "You were down the beach this afternoon, weren't you?" This was put as an accusation, not as a question.

"I was," answered Jerry. Then, reaching in his pocket: "Have a new piece of gum?"

Hornby pushed his arm aside. "Not yours, thanks! What were you doing down the beach—huh?"

Jerry paused. As mentioned, he knew the Hornby type; but that was in the army, and there are courts-martial in the army for certain impulsive acts.

"I said, what were you doing down the beach? Are you deaf?"

"What do you think I was doing—building a battleship?"

"No impertinence! Answer me!"

Jerry tried placating. "See here, Hornby—" But it was no use.

"*Mr.* Hornby to you!"

Jerry flared. "Mr. Hornby—hell! That goes on duty, but out here you're Hornby and I'm Martin! Now, what d'you want to know?"

Hornby gulped, endangering his entire respiratory system. But he recovered quickly. He'd show this pup—and now. He assigned the great wad to one cheek and began. "I'll tell you what I want to know! What do you mean by sneaking down the beach with that damned banjo of yours and—"

"Excuse me," Jerry interrupted. "I didn't sneak and, as you asked, I'm not deaf."

"Shut up! Er—and then trying to make up to Mr. Jessup's daughter. I saw you!"

"How did you see us?"

"Never mind! I was down that way myself." Then a revealing addition: "I knew she'd be there."

"So you were peeping," Jerry prodded. "Well, how did we look?"

"See here! Miss Jessup and I are good friends, understand? You're not to see her again. She's not one of these girls you army chaps can put on a lot of swank with and—"

Jerry stepped very close to Hornby, looking down into the excited, unbeautiful face. "I shall see Miss Jessup whenever I damn please, if she likes," he said calmly. "I knew her long ago, for that matter."

"You're a liar!"

Jerry's arm had been waiting for this; it acted as though the words had released a spring. Hornby, hit stingingly under one eye, fell back against the wall of the quarters. There was a convulsive gulp, and Jerry laughed aloud. "Good Lord, Hornby! You've swallowed your gum!"

The blow and the internal catastrophe stopped Hornby. One hand to his face, the other over his stomach, he said: "It's mutiny and assault—that's what it is! You'll find out tomorrow!" Then ingloriously he went.

THE following morning, a welcome sun that rose through a cloudless sky made the events of the previous day seem unreal, imagined. The calm of the station, just waking, belied such thrilling things. But Jerry waited.

At mess he was chided for not having played for the men, and forced to promise more entertainment that evening. Obviously, they were ignorant of the private dramatics in which he had taken part. He jested with them, listened indifferently to fresh reports of a Republican siege of the station—and waited.

His suspense was not long. Reporting at the London key, at eight, he was met by Hornby, bellicose and chewing as ever. Only, beneath one small eye Jerry noticed a bluish token of the evening's brief encounter. Oddly enough, he felt rather sorry about it. But Hornby shattered any commiserating emotions without delay.

"Martin, you're to report to Mr. Jessup at once. You're relieved here!"

"Right-o!" said Jerry, briefly enough. He left the office and made for Mr. Jessup's house. "Well, it's what I expected," he mused; "Hornby would run to Jessup about it."

The front door stood open, and Jerry entered the hallway. On one side of this, behind a closed door, was the room that served as the superintendent's office. He was immediately conscious of voices in this room. Another moment and he recognized those of Mr. Jessup and Jo. Natural enough; he'd wait. Absently he stared at one of those indelicate pictures of an unmistakably dead fish, on Mr. Jessup's wall. Then a name—his own—and other words that came through the door, arrested him. The man had said: "Martin's a belligerent pup! He's got to learn a lesson!" Then Jo's voice, on a plaintive note, said something about "too strict, father. . . ." She was pleading for him! Jo! The man grumbled something else about insubordination and discipline. Then, clearly: "Father, I don't care—I like him! I like him awfully! I'm glad he hit Hornby. I've tried to tell you a thousand times I don't like Hornby, and I never can. I don't care if he *will* be a superintendent!"

Jo! But suddenly Jerry realized he was eavesdropping—and liking it, too. Should the door open, he would unquestionably be discovered. That would be ruinous. Quickly, stealthily, he tiptoed from the hall, down the steps, and gained the quarters, invisible from Jessup's window. In the doorway he paused, breathless, his heart hammering. Jo had said, "I like him awfully!" She had interceded for him! He would never let her know; but he would never forget.

He promptly faced the superintendent's house again, and blared forth "Tipperary" in his loudest whistle. Then he clumped up the steps like a giant and pounded over the threshold. As expected, the voices had stopped. The door opened, and Jo came into the hall. Jerry thought that her eyes were moist. He felt awfully like grasping her hands and saying terrific things.

Perhaps this was the strange light she saw in his own eyes when she said casually: "Good morning, Jerry. Father's waiting for you." He mumbled "Thanks," and before he could add to it, she turned and went upstairs.

The omnipotent Jessup, stern, gray and sententious, greeted Jerry with "Sit down, sir!" Jerry obeyed. Mr. Jessup then briefly summed up his offenses. He had made the men late at relief, and this before presenting his papers; he had then overslept and failed to report as ordered; he had clandestinely and against regulations sought out *and annoyed* Miss Jessup; he had been impertinent to Mr. Hornby, and, finally, had assaulted that personage. All within twenty-four hours. This was little news to Jerry. He remonstrated that he had not expected to see Miss Jessup; did not even know she was here, but the answer was "Pooh-pooh, Martin!" So he abandoned thoughts of defense and waited sentence.

"I don't like to fine you, Martin, or send in a bad report to the company—yet. I've decided to give you four hours extra duty, at nights, for one week." He paused; then, as Jerry said nothing: "It's—it's a bit hard to tell you exactly how I feel about your seeing Miss Jessup. She tells me you met when you were wounded. That was very fine of you, but the war's over now, and, frankly, I must forbid your seeing her again. You will understand. An operator with twelve pounds a month, you know—it's quite impossible. That's all; but don't forget!"

NOW it was far worse than if Jo had not come back for him at all. The station assumed an unbearable aspect.

When he reported for his first extra duty the bellicose Hornby was there, looking more like the proverbial cat who had swallowed the canary than the supervisor who had gulped his gum. He was quite as puffed; and one might imagine his purring.

After two days of melancholy chafing under the superintendent's orders, and before reporting again at night, Jerry sought Disbrow, in the latter's house. Disbrow would be understanding, sympathetic, safe to confide in. Jerry, never having known a father, turned to this man much in the spirit of a son who seeks consolation and advice from an experienced, yet softened, source. His countryman welcomed him happily. Mrs. Disbrow, who had been sewing, rose fumblingly, and went upstairs.

"Well, Martin!" Disbrow exclaimed, placing one arm about Jerry's shoulders. "I was afraid I'd driven you away from me. Perhaps I was a bit too meddling, eh?" He lowered his voice, and nodded toward the steps. "You must excuse Mrs. Disbrow. She—she doesn't like talking to people; it frightens her." Then, heartily: "But, my word, I'm glad to see you, son! Sit down there. Anything on your mind?"

There was much; and Jerry, thus encouraged, hastened to unburden it. He told Disbrow everything—from his first meeting with Jo to his present predicament. The older man listened gravely and, when Jerry had finished, asked quietly, "Is that all?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you want my advice?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then I'm sorry, son, but I'll have to repeat my words of the other day; just get out. Get away from the cables and into the world."

Jerry countered. "But Jo—Miss Jessup—don't you see?"

Disbrow's smile was burdened with kindness. "Of course I see, though young fellows like you never think we older men were once your age. It seems too much to imagine. But, believe me, every older man remembers only too well the emotions of his youth and its impulsiveness—only too well. . . . This girl, what little I've seen of her, is doubtless a sweet, fine little lady. To you there's no one like her from Pole to Pole. Believe me or not, Martin, there *are* others. . . . And Mr. Jessup is quite right. Consider now: you have twelve pounds a month. Granting she's in love with you—"

Jerry interposed. "I don't know that she is, sir."

"But granting she is, consider now: do you want to condemn a lovely creature like her to *your* earnings? My boy, you're on a brink. It's hard, I know, but, oh, take my advice! Get a real start in the world; then time enough to marry." He spread his hands in a gesture of finality. "That's all I can tell you, Martin."

Jerry hoped that, somewhere, there might be a middle course. But Disbrow, though gentle, was unyielding. At parting, he said, gripping Jerry's hand: "Don't let it beat you, boy! Oh, if I were your age—if I were your age! Good night, and good luck!"

Good luck! Jerry wondered if there was such a thing. He had gone for advice and knew that that advice was sound. But then he decided that Disbrow was grown pessimistic. He determined not to "get out"—without Jo. . . . And Disbrow, being fifty, knew well that his counsel would be swept away by the tempest in Jerry's heart.

His extra duty finished that night, Jerry marched with strange deliberation into the mess-hall, with his banjo. He played till his fingers were sore and blistered; he sang till he was hoarse. It was a safety-valve for emotions under dangerous repression.

AS THE afternoon following his visit to Disbrow wore lazily to twilight, Jerry sat on his bed and pondered one burning question: *How?* He knew the watchfulness of Mr. Jessup. He knew that discovery would certainly remove him from all chance of seeing Jo. Her window was less than thirty yards from his own—both facing the bay. But there was Jessup's, too; and a word, a suspicious call, would bring quick discovery. During those times that official business called Mr. Jessup to the office, it was of signal interest that the bellicose Hornby loitered near. Hornby watching *her!* But *how*, he worried, how to get some word to her? Abstractedly, he listened to a phonograph in one of the houses. A mincing, nasal voice was lamenting something in a watery ballad. It annoyed him. He wondered if Jo heard it, too, and was annoyed. Then—why hadn't he thought of it before! The banjo—a song—his words, any words! She'd hear him and, perhaps, answer! They were all accustomed to his playing now, and would pay no attention at this hour. And least of all would Jessup listen.

He sat by the window and struck several chords. Then he sang an army song. By now she must be listening, he reasoned. So—he played odd chords and, inventing an outrageous melody, sang this shocking lyric:

"Oh, can, oh, can you get away
And meet me anywhere you say
This e-vening? I go on doo-ty at eight,
So do not say too late—er, Alabammy!"

He stopped, breathless—as much from creative effort as from excitement and fear of discovery. No sound. The stillness was rather awful after this charivari. Then her voice came in his window. What was that? "Annie Laurie"! He waited, listening, tense. He waited, not appreciating that she sang "Annie Laurie" very beautifully. Then, to the same old melody was added this verse never before heard:

"I'll be there at seven-thirty,
At seven-thirtee-ee;
Where we were the other day-ee—
Tra-la, her promise true."

"JERRY, it's risky!" were her first words, on running up to him, where the ledge concealed them from the station.

"Hang the risk!" he replied warmly. "I *had* to see you, Jo!"

"And I've wanted to see you, Jerry—oh, more than you'll ever know! But if father learns of it, or Hornby—"

"Jo, you don't like him, do you?"

"Of course I don't, silly! But—oh, it's hard to explain—father wants me to marry him—"

"Hornby!"—with horror.

"Father thinks it would keep me here at the station, with him. He doesn't understand, poor dear." She looked up into his worried eyes. "Jerry, why are men so stupid?"

Stupidly he asked: "But what has your father against me?"

"*So* stupid," she repeated. Then, nervously: "Don't you see? He's afraid that maybe I—I— Oh, Jerry, you're worse than he is!"

He stared beyond her to the bay, where the night crept in from the sea. He knew, in that moment, he could hold her to him, kiss her, and tell her what had filled his heart. But he only stared, restrained by some unaccountable force. He remembered watching a ship, the first he had seen in the bay, set her riding-lights in the gloom. Patiently she closed her eyes, companion to his silence. Thus they stood; and humble in the first realization of their love. Then the force that had restrained him took form; it was Disbrow's words: "Consider now: do you want to condemn a lovely creature like her to *your* earnings?"

"Jo," he said abruptly, "we can't do it, that's all. We can't do it. I'm a pauper. It wouldn't be fair to you."

"Don't you know I've thought of that?" she asked quietly. "I believe in you, Jerry; that's enough."

Still he paused, fearful, uncertain. She, the girl, intuitive, mature, dominated. "Jerry dear, we *must* leave here. I've stood it as long as I can. It's no place for you. I can help for a while—nursing. We're not even moving here; we're just marking time. Let's begin to build our lives, together. Jerry, take me away with you—now!"

Strength, confidence, determination pulsed through him. She was right. He was a blind, hesitating fool. With her he could begin real things. . . . It was nearly dark. A cold star shone unblinking over the dull hulk in the bay. His eyes fixed on the quivering silver of its reflection, he said: "I will, Jo! We'll go right away—together."

Then, simply, he kissed her.

Here their new world crashed and sent them hurtling through dizzy space. A voice, thick and menacing, had said: "Miss Jessup, your father wants to see you at once! Martin, you're to report to your room till further orders!" It was, of course, the bellicose Hornby.

After a sleepless night—sleepless with the certainty that Jo would suffer on his account—the ax of Jessup's justice descended. It was, perhaps, sharper than Jerry had anticipated. A terse order directed him to "proceed at once" to the company's repair-ship *Marius*, to relieve the ship's operator, who was to go on sick-leave. It was the ship he had seen in the bay. A cable, fouled by a trawler, had brought the *Marius* to Ballinskellig's the day before. A request to the station for a relief operator had made things very simple for Mr. Jessup. It was all quite legitimate. It was uncannily so. Even Mr. Jessup sensed this.

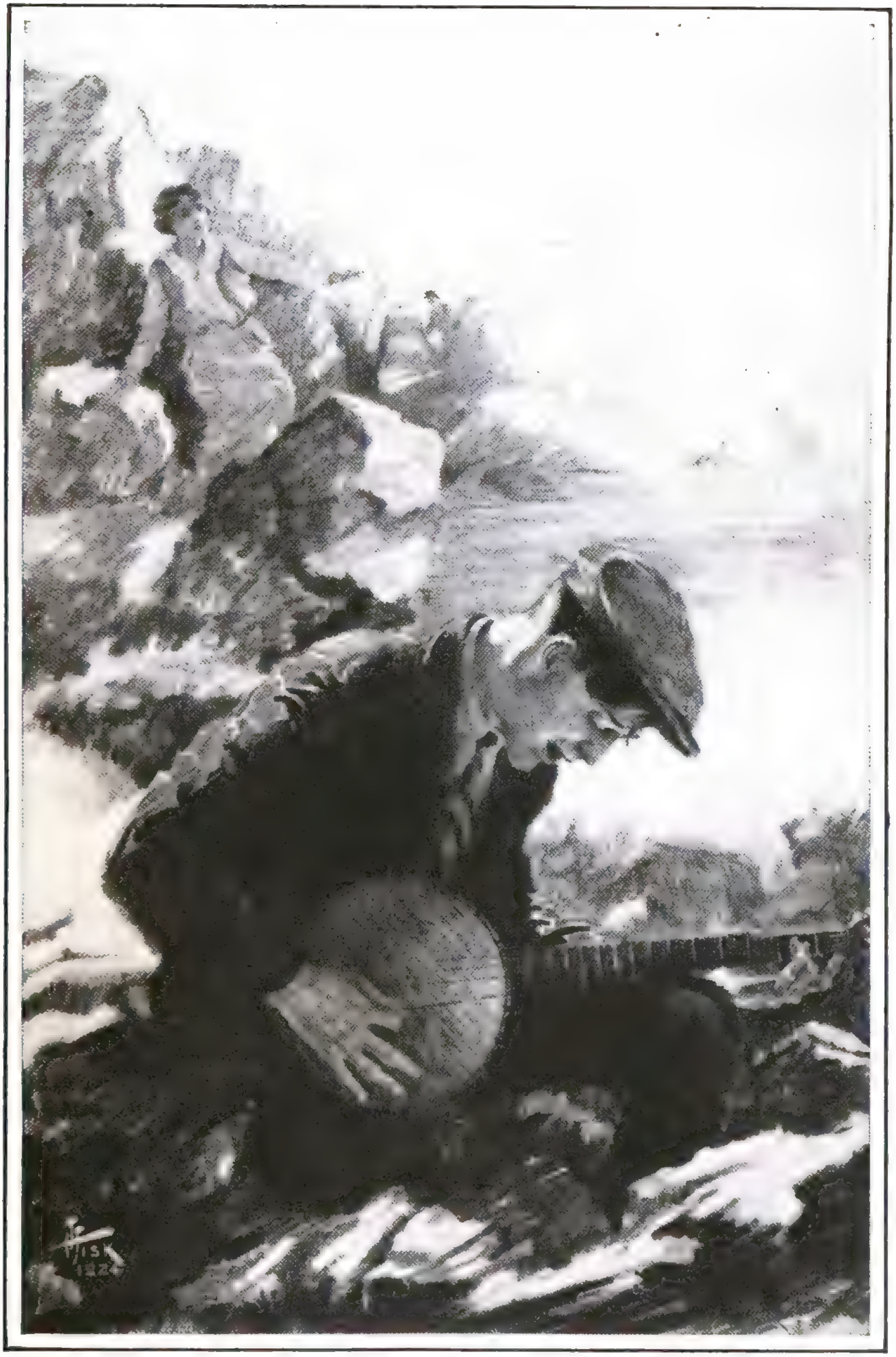
THE *Marius* was one of those ships that seem condemned to unending servitude. She had been battered and shaken in the wrath of generations of storms. She was blistered and scarred. She had even survived four years in submarine waters to be continued in creaking bondage to the cables. She was unsightly, patched, stinking. Her decks were cluttered with cable-gear; and what space remained was entirely needed by Captain Tunby—the largest man that Jerry had ever seen, and quite the most remarkable. An outrageous beard, bifurcated by the wind, swung coarse and tangled and gray against his shoulders. His voice might well have served as his foghorn. Jerry felt that the ship must list to what side its skipper moved. But Captain Tunby was a good commander; as violent in jest as he was in fury; and fair with his crew. His eyes, twinkling and blue, surveyed Jerry with open approbation. He bellowed a welcome and assigned him a tiny cabin aft from his own. Then he outlined his simple duties of "cutting in" on tested cables.

Jerry asked how long he might expect to remain on the ship. "God knows!" roared Tunby. "It's none so easy to get an operator from the station. I don't understand old Jessup being so damned obliging with you! To tell the truth, my regular man's pretty sick. I may not get him back at all."

At eight knots, sweating and groaning beneath the sun, the *Marius* left Ballinskellig's; left the station, Jerry's friends—and Jo. Here was loneliness which the novelty of this strange shipboard did not palliate. The station and its bleak surroundings were much to be preferred to the *Marius* at sea. There was no work for him that afternoon. He passed the time astride a forward winch, staring at the open sea, and worrying—for Jo. If he ever again met Hornby, that worthy would not escape so easily. But what would that accomplish? . . . A crushing realization of his absolute impotence fell like a burden on his shoulders. And after all, he mused, he had only himself to blame.

He had dinner with the captain and watched the latter eat with something of awe. The giant had a talent for tossing four or five spoonfuls of food into his mouth, snapping it shut, and swallowing without apparent mastication. He then repeated this fascinating process until great dishes of food had disappeared into his elephantine body. It was noisy magic, but magic none the less. He once interrupted the operations to chide Jerry for his lack of appetite. He followed the remark by generously gobbling all of Jerry's food.

He then insisted on teaching Jerry a



A voice, startlingly near and terribly unexpected, interrupted his song. "That's ripping, Jerry. Didn't know you could do it!"

childish game of cards. He was passionately fond of this pastime, and told Jerry, "We'll play this every night," which, under the circumstances, was not debatable. When he won, he bellowed his delight; and if he lost, he bellowed just the same, and genially insulted himself with graphic and salty oaths.

THREE days of repairing cable, and their nights of the childish game, passed slowly, hopelessly. Tunby showed a keen desire to keep Jerry aboard indefinitely. Jerry, hoping against hope for a different means, still hesitated to write his resignation. The captain would be displeased and could make it very bad for him—for months, perhaps. And Jerry liked the grizzled old Tunby. It would hurt, telling him at all.

It was toward the fourth evening—a Sunday—that the sea grew choppy and ominous clouds came low from the horizon, preceded by an evil wind. The captain altered his course to encircle the storm. He glared at the oncoming clouds and echoed their thunder, cursing the coast and storms impartially. But the twelve-knot ship was not to escape. The storm broke full upon her, seeming to concentrate its furies on her long-delayed destruction. There was mad haste in battening and securing. Sweat coursed with rain down the men's faces. There is a saying that, until one has known starvation, love and Paris, one has not lived. To these requisites should be added a storm at sea in a ship like the *Marius*. . . . Jerry stood watching, suddenly respectful of the sea and its men.

"Put back for Ballinskellig's!" Tunby bawled through the din. He then screamed in Jerry's ear that seeking the shelter of Ballinskellig's, at night, through its rocks and bars, was almost as hazardous as trying to ride out the storm. "But I can't make Dingle Bay; the wind'd drive me on Bray Head! She's old, is this girl; she can't stand many hours of this! We'll be takin' water like a sponge!"

Twelve times Jerry thought he was shipwrecked; and each time the *Marius*, like a suffering animal, came up and lunged blindly into the next punishing wave. Darkness came quickly; and the night was a bedlam of storm noises.

Fearful, and praying to strange gods, the captain took the wheel at the entrance to the bay. With just enough way for her helm, he miraculously took the *Marius* to comparatively calm water. "Full speed astern!" he howled; then, "Let go!" and the anchor splashed over the bow. The men gave mute but fervent thanks, and grinned at each other as men do who have miraculously escaped terrible things. Tunby pointed shoreward, to lights, dim and hazy through the rain. "There's your damn' station," he told Jerry, and went below for his food.

There, indeed, it was—if one strained hard enough through the wet black. There somewhere were Disbrow, and Napoleon, and Jo. Fate had brought him near her again. He wondered—though it wasn't likely—if she might be peering at the lights of the ship, and thinking of him. The crew had gone below to eat. Their happy blasphemies came upward to him, mixed with the lively clatter of dishes. He stood by the rail, alone on the splattering deck, loath to leave sight of those dim lights ashore, near one of which Jo must be. "When?" he asked himself. "When—and how?" Thus he stood in the cold downpour, lost in more profitless wondering, chafing anew at his helplessness.

He was startled by a reddish flash near one of the buildings, followed, as the sound reached him, by a sharp report. Soon half a dozen spurts of flame darted from shore, followed by the unmistakable crackling of rifles. He ran aft to the captain, who was stuffing himself prodigiously. "Sir!" he exclaimed. "There's firing ashore—at the station!"

But the captain was far from the station; and, more important, he was eating. He waved one paw in a deprecating gesture, saying through much food: "Tush! Sit down to this meat, boy."

"Don't you want to see?" Jerry urged. "It's rifles, I'm sure. There may be trouble—"

Tunby swallowed, which was quite something. "Trouble—hell! What do you think *I've* had these past four hours—a tea party on the Royal yacht? Trouble! There's trouble everywhere these days. You don't have to squint for it through a storm! Now, sit down and—" But Jerry had fled back to the bow.

HE HEARD more shots, not always seeing their flashes. He thought he heard hoarse cries that came over the interval of black water. Then a pinkish glow quavered wickedly, and increased with awesome speed. It was fire: a building of the station. He remembered now! The rumors of the insurgents! He ran, stumbling and sliding, back to the captain.

"A building's on fire, sir! Come look!"

Tunby cursed roundly, but followed Jerry out into the rain. "Well, I'll be damned! It *does* look like a fire!"

"It *is* a fire, sir!"

"Ye-es, it surely is. Well, well!"—with inflaming calmness.

"Aren't we going in, sir? Won't you send in the boats?"

Tunby stared through the rain at Jerry with more wonder than the blaze had provoked. "Go ashore? Through this water?"

"But they may need us!" Jerry exclaimed.

"Are you crazy, Martin? You can't get a boat through that water—not once in a hundred. Anyhow"—here he turned toward his cabin—"I'm a sailor, not a fireman."

Jerry halted him with: "Captain! Do you suppose it's the Republicans taking the station?" But if he had expected this to excite Tunby he was disappointed.

"Like as not," the skipper replied, gazing shoreward again. "I've heard talk of it for weeks. But it's not your fight, nor mine, Martin. That's one good thing about being afloat—even in the *Marius!* And," he added, with a nudge, "no matter who loses, the Irish must win!"

He turned again to his cabin. It was Jerry's tone that stopped him. "Captain, will you give me a boat? I want to go in."

"You want to go in? In the name of Ann's donkey, what for?"

It was something to do with Jo. It was entirely to do with Jo. Weakly, he said, "Be-cause."

"Well, that's as good a reason as any on a night like this. But no boat leaves this ship until morning, if then. Now, come on and eat, Martin!"

Tunby was gone. The fire had mounted higher, throwing a blood-tinted path across the water to the ship. He could distinguish other buildings now—a lurid scene from this distance. The other lights had gone out; and the firing had ceased. But he could stand this no longer. His excited brain imagined that Jo called him. He would try once again. Rushing to Tunby's cabin, he cried: "Sir, will you *please* lower a boat?"

"No! Damn it, no!" Tunby roared.

There was no choice, then. Casting off his shoes and coat, he climbed over the rail, stood poised a moment in fear, then plunged to the murk below. The shock was terrific. The black was like nothing he had ever known. A cold, terrifying, Cimmerian hour, it seemed. Gaining the surface at last, he was guided shoreward by the ominous beacon. The storm was withdrawing to sea, but the bay was choppy, unfriendly; and the rain was an added discomfort, pelting his eyes and obscuring everything. He struggled on.

Looking back at the deeper shadow of the ship, he was dismayed to see how small had been his progress. Then, with awful surprise, his face and body crashed against a rock. He pushed away, with a cry. He realized now why Tunby was afraid; and knew himself in a world of hostile elements. If his strength should fail . . . He stroked on—and on. . . . Then fresh dismay struck deep as his leg began to pain with every stroke. The pain rapidly increased to agony; and he was forced on his back, to rest. Thus weary, he glimpsed the furtive moon, now released by retreating clouds. It all seemed so terribly unreal. . . . He turned, and started anew for the shore.

JERRY awoke from a sleep as deep as death—and not far from it. Opening his eyes, he stared into the bearded face of Captain Tunby, bending over him anxiously. One of Tunby's great paws rested on his forehead. "There now!" said the captain, with astounding gentleness. "Don't talk; you're all right now."

Puzzling! What was this? It wasn't the ship. He asked the obvious question.

"It's Mr. Jessup's house," the captain told him. "There now!"

He then discovered an aged, kindly man, bald and grotesquely wrinkled, who stood smiling at the foot of his bed. Jerry's eyes asked questions, and the old man spoke.

"I'm Dr. Duffy, from Cahirciveen," he told Jerry. His brogue was rich and musical. "Just lie quiet, me lad, as the good captain tells ye. We'll have ye in fightin' trim in a day or two." He then turned to Tunby and motioned him to the door. There he whispered instructions and withdrew.

Jerry grouped through this mystery of a new and inexplicable existence. Gradually the curtain of fog lifted, revealing the ship, then the fire, his plunge, the cloud and the moon.

He turned toward Tunby. "I—I made an ass of myself, didn't I?" he said, smiling weakly.

"You mighty near made a funeral of yourself. When I discovered you'd jumped for it, I put over a boat—with some cursing at the time, I'll tell you—and we found you, by the grace o' God, just before you—er—well, if it hadn't been for a moon— But say! You didn't tell me the *real* reason you wanted to come ashore." This with a gruff chuckle. "She said she knew you'd do it. Ain't that Ann's donkey for you? She said she knew you'd do it!"

"You mean Jo. Where is Jo? Is she all right?"

"All right enough to have you brought here to her house, and work over you like the rest of us all night—only a bit harder. Doc Duffy says he don't know what he'd done without her. He called her unhysterical, which he said we wasn't."

"But what happened? The station, I mean?"

"Oh, it's all in the hands of the Republican lads. They fired a few shots, it seems, and the old quarters caught fire, somehow; but now that they've got the place, and stopped the cables, they're as peaceable as any Irishmen I ever saw—exceptin' a few of the sentries. They promise more shootin' if anybody tries to leave. They're afraid somebody'll get the Free Staters. They'll come along in a day or so, anyhow; then we'll have some excitement. But last night, well, there really wasn't no cause for anybody actin' up like—like—never mind. Want some food? No? Can't understand that. Well, try some more sleep, son."

Jerry closed his eyes to welcome dark again. His leg was bound. It reminded him of the hospital. He slept. Tunby—this is hard to imagine—tiptoed from the room.

He awakened again to something tenderly familiar. Gentle fingers were stroking his hair. It was very like the hospital; and he opened his eyes. Jo! Jo, smiling and nearly beautiful, and all in the white of nursing. Jerry, being man, never knew with what infinite thrill she had taken forth this uniform, refreshed it, and donned it, tingling, hoping that he'd notice. He did. Through his first embarrassment, he said: "You're a nurse again, aren't you?" And she was very happy.

She pressed cool lips to his forehead. "We're going away from here, Jerry boy," she said.

"Yes," he repeated, "we're going away, together."

They gazed at each other, long and in silence.

YOUTH is served with strength, which returned to Jerry quickly. With it one morning came Mr. Jessup, stern as usual, but not unkindly. He sat by Jerry's bed and succinctly made clear the object of his coming. "My daughter," he said, without prologue, "loves you. She has told me so. Are you in love with her?"

Jerry looked in his inquisitor's gray eyes. "I am, sir."

"As I thought. Now, Martin, I want to tell you a brief story. There was once a very beautiful girl who fell in love with a cable man, not unlike yourself. She gave up her friends and abandoned the best things in life to follow him. She stood by him for years, in just such desolation as this. The hardship and loneliness aged her terribly. She faded long before her time. She loved beauty, life, happiness, but had none of them. Her husband, ambitious, intent on rising, never noticed these things until it was too late. She died, Martin. Yes, she died of mental and spiritual starvation. That girl was Jo's mother, my wife."

The simple narration of this tragedy made it more frightful. After a trying pause, Jerry said: "But, Mr Jessup, you would have kept Jo here, I understand—"

"Had I continued in my selfishness—yes. I'd hoped she might settle down here, in a way, but I've been brought to realize she's like her mother. I want her to go to my sister, in London. You can see why." He rose stiffly. "Martin, matters of discipline that have come between us are wiped out. You meant to do a fine thing last night, if you were needed, and I thank you. You see, I can't help you here sufficiently to matter. But when we get the station back, I *can* arrange a discharge, at once. If you love Jo, you'll see the truth in what I've tried to tell you. You can't put a rose in sand and gloom and—and expect it to live, Martin. Think it over."

The simile was homely but effective. But Jerry had thought it over—at length and dispassionately. He knew every argument against him. The alternative of taking Jo out into the world, to inevitable hardship and privation, was no better. He pictured her in tawdry clothes, tired, cooking for him in a miserable flat, near anywhere he might get a job. Suppose he didn't get a job. Mr. Jessup was right. Disbrow was right. And so, when Jo came to him that evening and said again, "We're going away soon, aren't we, Jerry?" he lied bravely, "You bet we are!" But he had other plans, sadly sound and unromantic.

The following evening he sent for Disbrow and Napoleon, to abet those plans. They told him of the station and its men in this strange inactivity, and talked in excited whispers of a fight on the impending arrival of the Free State troops. Then he surprised them with a sudden announcement. "Boys," he said abruptly, "you've got to help me. Will you?"

Napoleon answered for them both.

"Would we 'elp our own mother?"

"Good! This is it: I'm getting out of here tomorrow. I'm running for it, see?"

"But—" they began.

"Please don't ask questions! I'm running, that's all. It's not deserting; my discharge will be taken care of before I reach London. But I need my clothes; and my money's in them. Old Tunby'll give them to you. And don't forget my banjo! Sneak 'em up here without *anybody* knowing. Will you do that?"

"But the sentries?" Disbrow worried. "They won't allow you to leave."

Jerry grinned. "I guess I've got through tougher lines once or twice."

"Cawn't ya wyte till we're peaceable-like an' calm again?" Napoleon begged.

"I can't wait at all! Now, I've asked you a favor. Will you?"

His two friends, oddly drawn together by a common idol, looked at each other. They had no choice. They looked back at Jerry and nodded.

"Good!" he said. "Remember: don't let anyone know, and *don't forget my banjo!*"

They stayed late into the night, loath to believe that he was passing from their lives.

It was the only way, he reasoned.

THE next afternoon, Napoleon sneaked into his room with his belongings, stowed them under his bed, whispered, "Tunby says best o' luck, lad!" and departed.

Jo read to him—happy and unsuspecting. He heard nothing that she read, but let his eyes rest upon her face—her mouth that once he had kissed. He saw the star—that night on the ledge—cold and silver over the hulk of the *Marius*. It was not his star, after all. But it wasn't Hornby's, anyhow. He felt proud in a warning sense that he was doing something for Jo. He'd just go. It *was* the only way. She'd meet some fine fellow in London. . . . Or, maybe, if things went right for him, some day . . .

He had determined to leave when she was at dinner, and when she rose to go, he said: "Jo, look at me. You—you said you believed in me. You do, don't you?"

His changed expression, his new tone, puzzled her. "Why, of course! But is anything wrong, Jerry?"

He dissembled. "No; only—will you always believe I'm—I'm all right, Jo?"

"Of course I will, silly boy! But what is it, Jerry?"

"I—I just wanted to hear you say it, I guess." Then, almost brusquely: "Go to your dinner, Jo."

"My own boy!" she said. "It's getting on your nerves." She kissed his cheek, patted him chidingly, and left the room.

He bit his lip and stifled back a great weakness. He wanted to cry out to her, to have her back, and give up the whole sickening plan. But he conquered, and donned his clothes.

Battered bag and banjo held tight, he sought the rear and unused stairs. Down these he tiptoed, careful of every step. Around a dark corner he found a door—unlocked. He opened it and emerged into the shadow of the house. Here, for the first time, he considered the sentries. He had taken the whole thing for granted; but they were yet to be passed. Intently, he peered along the walk that skirted the buildings, on the side away from the bay. Beyond, over the sports field and a stretch of gorse, lay the Cahirciveen road, and escape.

A tall man was pacing the walk, rifle on shoulder. His post was a long one, taking him past the office, a full hundred and fifty yards from the Jessup house. Jerry watched him draw near. Concealed in the shadow, he could have touched the man as he turned to double back again. Jerry waited. The footsteps grew dim, and the sentry melted into the shadow, the lights of windows marking his progress as he passed them. When he was near the office, Jerry bolted, bending as low as his burden permitted. He gained the sports field, crossed it, and entered the scrub-growth, headed for the highway. He was half amazed, half amused, at the ease of accomplishing this.

Stumbling through the gorse, counting his escape a fact, he was frozen by a piercing voice, directly ahead: "Halt there!" Instinctively, and with too much noise, he dropped to the ground. The voice called again: "Halt or I'll shoot!" This puzzled him. He placed his bag between him and the unseen sentry; and while he pondered the second challenge, a shot rang just ahead, followed by the sound of a bicycle falling noisily. Then a choking cry.

For the first time, Jerry realized the challenge had not been for him. Groaning followed the cry, and he knew that some one was hit badly. But Jerry had been at war. He lay still, and decided to make his escape in the excitement—for people were already calling and running from the station. Then the wounded man's voice came over the ground to him: "Oh, you damned fool! I—I'm done for. C-call my daughter, Miss Jess— Oh, God!" he moaned horribly.

It was Jessup! Jessup trying to ride and urge help for the station! Jerry leaped to his feet and ran in the direction of the voice. He came upon two figures in the gloom: one prostrate and writhing; the other doggedly defensive. "I'm sorry, but orders is orders. I challenged him fair enough an' he wouldn't stop. I didn't aim to kill."

Jerry, the first one on this scene, took Jessup in his arms and started back to the station. He was met by excited men, carrying lanterns and pocket flashlights. They crowded him in close pursuit. He was limping again and none too strong; but he ordered them back and alone he carried Jessup, who was bleeding badly.

"Get a doctor, some of you!" Jerry cried; and made for Jessup's house.

Before the doctor could arrive, Jo did what she could; but she had seen enough to know that her father couldn't live. She and Jerry kept all others from his room.

The dying man turned glazed eyes to the youth beside his bed. With awful effort, he mumbled: "Now you'll have to—to—" His gesture toward Jo, the last he ever made, was eloquent.

Jo bent over him. "He will, father; he will, and—" But there was no need to finish, for Jessup could not hear.

IT WAS the next day that the new superintendent, one Hornby, humbled by the presence of death, came to Jerry with unaccustomed mien.

"Martin," he said, "I've something to tell you. I'm the superintendent here now, though I hadn't hoped to get it this way. That's enough for me, I guess, and I know when I can't have everything. A letter came for you about some money in the States that an aunt left you. It wasn't much—but I burned the letter because—well, you know why. I—I saw, that night down on the ledge—and you can get out now whenever you want to." He turned and walked away.

Thus it was that a sandy-haired youth, tall and a trifle too thin, and a girl young and almost very pretty, sat back to back on an old Irish "jaunty," laden with bags and a banjo, its case in disreputable condition. As they turned into the Cahirciveen road, two figures—a little Cockney and a kindly man of fifty—stood arm in arm, watching them jog into distance.

"Blimy!" one mused aloud. "That's the end of 'em!"

"No," said the other, "that's the start of them." But the first never knew what he meant.

# The Pop-Eyed Cow

*It Could Have Happened Only in France, This Side-Splitting Incident Which a Famous Humorist Tells So Well*

## By Meade Minnigerode

The general got the cross of war,
Nobody knows what he got it for,
Hinky dinky, parlay voo—

WELL, in some cases, maybe so. But I think I know exactly what our general got his for—a nice, new, shiny enamel medal which came to him eventually when they were distributing the complimentary hardware—and I think he deserved it.

I call him "our general" because Sidney Walsh and I found him in a ditch. Now I know that normally generals are not to be found in ditches, but that, nevertheless, is where we found this one. A very muddy ditch, in the vicinity of Brest, in Brittany, on a very dark night.

Sidney and I were bound for Paris, in my car, conducted by my good friend and chauffeur, Jules Picot. Sidney was then an admiral's aide, all done up in gold braid. He was at least twenty-two, and had a passion for radishes. Aside from that he was probably the most genially impudent young monkey in five navies, with the result that children adored him and old ladies cherished the recollection of his smile. In other words he was enormously popular, and quite delightfully conscious of it.

"There's no question about it," he was always assuring us. "I'm the most talked-to young man in Europe."

He was now on his way to Dunkirk, for the purpose of escorting an assortment of impending Congressmen through various scenes of marine activity. His observations on the subject, while entertaining, were hardly fit for reproduction. I had happened upon him, in the middle of the Rue de Siam at Brest, just as I was preparing to depart from that lamentable city. It had seemed to Sidney an excellent idea that he should accompany me on my journey to Paris, instead of languishing for eleven hours in the night express.

"And anyway," he explained, "if Jules Picot is in his usual form, perhaps we shall hit a tree or something, and then the admiral will be sorry he sent me to Dunkirk!"

Jules Picot was a famous chauffeur who, in his day, had driven generals, which accounted, no doubt, for his utter disregard of the ordinary amenities governing vehicular traffic. He was as a matter of fact, on the other hand, apparently immune from disaster. With Jules Picot at the wheel one moved with astounding celerity at all times, and occasionally with panic-striking hardihood, but always, as it turned out, in perfect safety.

"With me," he was always saying, "one may be arrested but one never gets hurt."

With Monsieur le Lieutenant Walsh aboard it was inevitable that Jules Picot should surpass himself. Sidney always managed to look extremely impressive, a trick which one seems to lose with age. We would not have been so late in starting, and consequently so far from our night's lodging at so advanced an hour, if Sidney had not insisted on taking me to dinner on a battleship. As it was, instead of hitting a tree we very nearly hit a general.

HE WAS standing up to his boot tops in a ditch, caught in the shaft of our searchlight like a beetle impaled on a pin, viewing what, under such circumstances, is usually called a tangled mass of wreckage. His cap was pushed down over one ear, and he was covered with mud from head to foot. He seemed to be a short, fat general. From the ditch, somewhere behind the ruined car, came a sound of futile tinkering.

"An evil has just occurred to a general," Jules Picot announced, and we slowed down.

"Is anything the matter with the pop-eyed car, Oswald?" the general was asking.

"Ah!" Sidney observed. "Optimist! I like him."

Oswald was evidently the general's driver.

"She's all busted to hell, general," his voice made answer.

"January Christmas!" the general remarked. "Give me a cigarette."

We made ourselves known and offered assistance. The general greeted us affably, still standing up to his knees in the ditch, and accepted the makings.

"The pop-eyed car skidded and landed in the pop-eyed ditch," he informed us. "No one was hurt, fortunately. Oswald, you're quite sure you're not hurt?"

Oswald was quite sure. They were a cheerful pair.

"I was on my way to keep an appointment with the French general commanding the zone—what's the name of that pop-eyed place, Oswald?"

"Kalamazoo, it sounded like to me, sir."

Oh, yes! Kermazelec. Well, we were a long way from Kermazelec.

"If the general will step out of the ditch," I suggested, "he will find it more comfortable in my car. We'll be very glad to take him to Kermazelec."

"Well, now, that's very kind of you," he beamed at us. "I guess perhaps I *had* better get out of this pop-eyed ditch. Do you hear, Oswald? These gentlemen are going to take me to Kermazelec."

"Yes, sir."

"You'd better walk back to that place we passed down the road a piece and get help. And then come for me tomorrow at General Manet's headquarters."

"Yes, sir."

"Well—good-by, Oswald."

"Good-by, general."

"You know," he remarked genially as we made a place for him in a corner of the tonneau, "even the seat of my pants is wet!"

He was an extremely engaging old party. Under similar circumstances some generals, and a good many colonels and most majors, would have been frightfully annoyed and excessively peevish. But he did not have a grain of ill-nature in his system. He was just an elderly stout gentleman who happened to be a general, and he took it all like a schoolboy. In fact, this whole expedition of his was, it seemed, an act of truancy.

"I RAN away from my aides," he chuckled. "They don't know I've gone. January Christmas! I can't call my soul my own when those pop-eyed young martinets are around! Now alone with Oswald I feel like a human being."

We found him simply delightful. He sat there in his corner, all rolled up in blankets, smoking an endless succession of cigarettes, and regaling us with reminiscences of the Academy, and the Philippines, and the Boxer uprising.

"Don't let me bore you to death. Did you ever hear about the officer of the day in Manila who fell off the end of a dock—"

We, for our part, fed him sandwiches and thermos coffee, and told him such anecdotes as seemed to match his own. He appeared to like best that story of Sidney's about a prominent younger member of one of the smartest clubs in Paris who happened to be a great-grandson of one of Napoleon's marshals, and who, having "ambuscaded" himself in the automobile service, had become a general's chauffeur.

"He turned up at the club one day in his little chauffeur's jacket, and one of the older members walked up to him before the entire room and said, 'I congratulate you—you conduct generals, whereas your great-grandfather only conducted privates!' I think he resigned from the club very soon after that. . . ."

Time, and the Breton night, were passing very pleasantly when suddenly Jules Picot leaned out from his seat and called to me through the window.

"I shall have taken a bad turning back there somewhere—in all cases we are utterly lost. The road has terminated and we are in the most complete obscurity."

"I'm afraid I must be a Jonah," the general smiled. Nothing was capable of shaking his equanimity.

"What do you mean, complete obscurity?" Sidney cried from the port window. "Isn't that a light over there—in that break in the trees or whatever it is?"

"In effect," Jules Picot assented, "it is a light. Monsieur Walsh has the eyes of a sailor. Let us proceed and make interrogations."

We proceeded, over what seemed to be a track across the fields, and found ourselves in a cobblestone courtyard belonging, evidently, to a good-sized farm. In the glare of our searchlight we could see vine-clad surfaces of mellowed gray stone, an ancient tower that might once have been a keep, the carved outlines of pointed arches above doors and windows deeply set in fortress walls. Five centuries, fully, of Breton history gazed stolidly down upon us. Aside from that the place appeared to be deserted. There was no sign of that light.

"Say, what is this?" Sidney exclaimed. "It gives me the willies."

"It's one of those old manors," I told him. "Brittany's full of them. Fifteenth or sixteenth century, I should say. There'll probably be a date over the door."

"It's mighty pretty," the general decided. "My aides never bring me to places like this!"

"That's all very fine and large," Sidney objected, "but I have a date in Dunkirk. Don't forget that."

"I also have a date!" the general recalled with apparent regret.

"Step on the siren, Jules, and see if you can stir up somebody."

JULES PICOT stepped on it with immediate results. It was as though he had blown the trumpet hanging beside the gate of some enchanted castle in a fairy tale. The walls did not crumble—Breton manor walls are entirely too solid for that—but the whole place became animate with the vocal manifestation of invisible presences. The night was pierced with outcries; wooden shoes came clogging down unsuspected pathways; patron saints were being shrilly summoned in minor discords. There was, as the French say, a "tintamarre," a "tohu-bohu," a general "brouhaha."

"This isn't a manor," Sidney assured us. "It's a madhouse."

A door opened finally, admitting the tremulous clarity of lanterns upon the scene, and, so to speak, a chorus of villagers incompletely garbed physically and considerably disarrayed mentally. Behind them, in the doorway, loomed the white-capped figure of a remarkably portly farmer's lady, of advanced years and alarming aspect. She stood, arms akimbo, as the saying goes, upon the top step, and viewed the assemblage with a frosty eye.

"And now for example what next?" she boomed suddenly.

Sundry voices arose to inform her of the exigencies of the situation, and then fell again as the unrestrained Sidney jumped out to discourse with her.

"Kind lady," he told her, "you see before you a general in the United States Army, a high functionary of the American government, and I, who am aide to an admiral, all three of us charged with the fate of empires and lost in an automobile—"

"In an automobile!" she cried. "Divine goodness, you have fallen from heaven."

"Not at all, madam, we have come from Brest—"

"An automobile!" she repeated. "But that is just what we need, an automobile."

"Recollect yourself, Jeanne," a rather plaintive masculine voice appealed to her from the darkness. "These gentlemen are personages—"

"No one asked your advice," she snapped.

"No, my love," the voice agreed at once. It belonged, we discovered subsequently, to her husband, a worthy man with a red nose.

"Personages!" she snorted. "And my cow, then, is she not also a personage?"

"Your cow, madam?" Sidney inquired politely.

"Yes, monsieur, my cow. She is sick, my cow—we were all in the barn when you arrived—she is sick, and you have come just in time with your automobile."

"An automobile, that has no connection whatever with a cow," Jules Picot interposed at this point.

"But yes, all to the contrary," she insisted. "My cow, she needs a doctor; without a doctor she will momentarily expire—and with an automobile we can get a doctor."

"Here, for heaven's sake!" I exclaimed. "I'm awfully sorry about the cow, but we've got to get the general to Kermazelec some time tonight."

"Oh, it's all one to me," he announced. "I like this place. What's the matter with her pop-eyed cow?"

Well, that was the trouble, no one knew

what was the matter with the pop-eyed cow. She had but recently had a calf, and now, suddenly in the night like that, she was taken with bellowings, and tremblings, and "fermentations." It was pitiful to behold.

"Such an expensive cow, too. . . ."

Now if the gentlemen would only wait a little quarter of an hour—one could prepare some supper—and meanwhile the automobile could fetch the doctor. A little matter of ten kilometers. One of the farm hands would show the way. How about it?

Sidney and the general, without any hesitation, both voted in favor of the cow. Jules Picot could not be considered to have any vote, whatever opinions he might entertain on the subject. The matter was consequently settled.

WE WERE escorted into the kitchen and installed at a long pine table, before a cheerful fire on an open stone hearth. A little instant only and there would be wherewith to eat.

"Radishes!" Sidney begged then. "Kind, good lady—radishes!"

"Well, for example, what next then!" the kind, good lady exclaimed, but her eye beamed less frostily already on Sidney. As usual, the young monkey was making an impression. For that matter her eye beamed less frostily on all of us. In fact, from the general attitude of her scullions and maids, it soon became evident that her alarming exterior was only a mask cloaking the kindest of hearts. Even her husband was only pretending to be afraid of her.

And her kitchen was a jewel, a marvel, a miracle of white plaster walls, stained a mellifluous brown with the smoke of countless cookeries, a vast chamber dimly apprehended through encircling shadows flecked with the comfortable gleam of brass and copper. A place where ancient revels had been prepared, where boar's heads had passed, borne aloft on steaming, flower-bedecked, aromatic platters, where minstrels had come singing legendary songs to the strains of strange instruments.

"January Christmas!" the general remarked.

Precisely, January Christmas! And there we sat eating radishes, among other things.

And while we 'sat there Madame ran up and down, chevying the maids, flicking towels at the scullions, and chattering like a magpie in French, and in Breton, and for all I know in Phœnician. They have left their mark deep on that countryside, the Phœnicians. And the burden of her complaint was "that Pierre Kergolo," that robber, that hypocrite—that hypocrite, that robber! What she would do to him before she finished with him! Stormy Thursdays in June!

"And who is Pierre Kergolo, and what has he done?" Sidney inquired, as soon as Madame was out of earshot for a moment—gone flying to the barn in answer to a panic-stricken summons.

A ripple of delighted laughter ran around the kitchen. Ah, that Pierre Kergolo! He was a famous one; he had bested Madame—ho-ho, ha-ha! Monsieur was pushed forward to explain to the gentlemen.

"One must pay little attention to Madame," he told us, with one eye on the door. "She has a good heart; she means nothing by what she says when she is in one of her humors."

"Oh, Madame's all right," Sidney assured him. "We're all strong for Madame—but *who* is Pierre Kergolo?"

Monsieur put one finger to his nose and winked at us.

"It was Pierre Kergolo who only the other day sold the cow to my wife!" he announced triumphantly. "And now the cow is sick—I think it is the milk fever myself—and Pierre Kergolo, he must have known when he sold the cow that she would have it again when she had another calf. That is why he sold her so cheap!"

"I see. He foxed Madame in a cattle deal, hey?"

"Perfectly. But what there is better yet is that it is Pierre Kergolo who is coming in the automobile. It is he the doctor."

"Oh, splendid! And what is Madame going to do to him?"

"Nothing at all. That is the joke—she will do nothing. She is afraid of Pierre Kergolo—to speak the truth, we are all a little afraid of Pierre Kergolo."

AH, YES, it was true; they were all afraid of Pierre Kergolo.

"But what are you afraid of him for? I thought you said he was the doctor, the veterinary?"

"Oh, no! There is no veterinary near by. Pierre Kergolo is a magician."

"A what?"

"A magician."

"January Christmas!" the general exclaimed. "A magician? I love white rabbits—"

"Pierre Kergolo is a very wise man. He mixes herbs and cures many ills. He makes *louzou*."

"He makes *what?*"

"*Louzou.* No one knows; it is a magic made from herbs, but it cures many ills, that is certain."

"I wonder if he'd give me a bottle!" the general remarked hopefully. "I suffer terribly from corns, especially in these pop-eyed boots!"

So Pierre Kergolo had sold the cow to Madame, and Pierre Kergolo was a magician! They believe in that sort of thing in Brittany, of course. It is a very ancient countryside, inhabited by a very ancient race of simple people who cling to very ancient faiths. There are fairies in Brittany, and pixies and sprites, and strange things happen on the long winter nights around the dolmens and menhirs. Witches still ride on brooms across the gorse at the full of the moon, and in the great forest of Broceliande, where the Phantom Hunter blows his ghostly horn at midnight, Merlin still sleeps. These things have always been so in Brittany, ever since the Phœnicians, and before.

"I don't care if I never get to Dunkirk!" Sidney decided, and went back to his radishes as Madame returned.

And then all at once Jules Picot's siren was wailing in the courtyard. A sudden hysterical sputter of laughter flared up in the kitchen, dying away in little suppressed explosions. The general was industriously scratching his left ear. Sidney pushed aside his radishes and tried to look solemn. Madame took three steps forward, and twice as many backward. The door into the hall opened, and Pierre Kergolo stood before us.

"January Christmas!"

It was such a figure, such a face, as the Pied Piper must have had. A long, thin, crooked-fingered man, restless as a flame, furtive and cautious, tense as a rapier sheathed in silent velvet, incredibly graceful, incalculably insolent, immeasurably beguiling. A long, thin, sharp-featured, deeply furrowed face, the color of red earth, under straight, intensely black hair which almost fringed the glittering eyes; lips that were pursed in scorn, alive with mockery; an insulting nose, inquisitive and tortuous. A crafty Breton face, a dark, mysterious Spanish face, a shrewd, sinister, secretive Phœnician face.

There he stood, all black and red in the firelight, ominous, fascinating, unforgettable.

"Come quickly, Pierre Kergolo," Madame said at once. "The cow is very sick."

The cow came first, of course. Pierre Kergolo said nothing. We all trooped out to the barn behind him, an incongruous collection in the flickering lantern light—peasants and dairy maids and "personages." The cow, when viewed, was obviously extremely unwell. She was lying down in the straw, thrashing around and bellowing most grievously. Over in a corner of the stall her calf stood shakily on his spindly legs and informed the world that his lady mother had not fed him recently. Pierre Kergolo stooped down and examined the cow with dexterous hands.

"It is the milk fever," he announced.

Now, I was not aware of the fact before, but it seems that the only remedy for milk fever is to blow cold air into the affected lacteal appendage, as it were. Unversed in such bucolic affairs, I am not prepared to state why—I only know that Nature has so arranged matters. Pierre Kergolo reached into his pocket and drew out a bicycle pump.

"Remove the calf," he commanded.

HAVE you ever tried to carry a terrified and recalcitrant calf any distance at all? It is no easy task. In the first place Sidney and I, who seemed to be nearest at the moment, had the deuce of a time getting hold of him, what with the slippery straw, his own evasive anatomy, and the necessity of dodging his parent's indiscriminate hoofs. We were not assisted either by Madame's hysterical gyrations.

"Take him by the tail! Take him by the tail!" she kept adjuring us.

"*Blah!*" the calf replied, meaning just as clearly as possible, "Just you *try* and take me by the tail!"

Then when we finally had succeeded in dragging him out more or less by the ears, amid a perfect pandemonium of laughter from the spectators—admirals' aides and government officials are not usually visible in Breton farmyards wrestling with calves—we found him decidedly unsymmetrical, as Sidney expressed it, for purposes of transportation. He was all legs and nose. A pretty calf, yellow and white, with great mournful eyes. An affectionate calf, too, who insisted on assuring us of his respect and admiration for us by violently licking our faces. What a journey! We parked him at last in an outhouse and returned to the barn to face an extraordinary scene.

The general was sitting on the cow's head, hanging on to her horns like grim death. Madame was making ineffective attempts to hold a lantern in one hand and keep the cow's tail from flicking in Pierre Kergolo's face with the other. The maids and scullions were being about as noisily helpful as a parcel of clowns at the circus while the carpets are being rolled up. Monsieur was looking as though he might be about to do something tremendously important at any minute. And Pierre Kergolo was extremely busy, flat on his stomach in the straw.

"The pop-eyed pump broke," the general informed us. "Come here and sit on this pop-eyed cow, if you can, and stop her from kicking the doc in the teeth!"

A hectic period of time thereupon elapsed in that barn, while the general, and Sidney and I, rocked precariously back and forth on the cow's ribs, and Pierre Kergolo did what—the pump having broken—it was necessary for him to do. After a while there came a moment when the cow appeared less ill at ease, and we all stood up.

"The cow is better," Pierre Kergolo decided. "That is all for the present."

We returned to the kitchen. Having done, for the time being, with Pierre Kergolo the doctor, I was looking forward now to seeing Pierre Kergolo the cattle dealer having it out with Madame. But I had forgotten Pierre Kergolo the magician.

"Put water in a pot and heat it," he ordered.

Every one rushed to do his bidding, Madame most eagerly of all, though she managed to achieve an air of indifference. No one said anything. The water steamed and bubbled. Pierre Kergolo took his time, looking solemnly at the end of his nose.

"Some salt, some flour, and a little pepper," he demanded suddenly.

"That is ridiculous," Madame remarked with great conviction—handing him the desired ingredients.

PIERRE KERGOLO said nothing. He went to the pot, poured in some salt and pepper and a pinch or two of flour, and began to stir the water. Sidney was having silent conniptions over in the corner, and the general was not succeeding in looking as dignified as he imagined. Madame was getting very red in the face.

"Divine goodness!" she boiled over finally. "What are you doing, Pierre Kergolo?"

"I am preparing a *louzou*," he told her.

"Puh!" she exclaimed bravely enough, while the kitchenful held its sides. "A little salt, and some pepper and flour in a pot—that is nothing. Anybody can do that—"

Pierre Kergolo looked at her with one darkly glittering eye. Madame retired hastily across the room. After a while he felt in his pocket and pulled out a paper, the contents of which—some white powder apparently—he dropped into the pot, and renewed his stirring. Madame was at his elbow again at once.

"What is that, Pierre Kergolo? Tell me, what is that you put in the pot?"

Silence.

"Pierre Kergolo—what did you put in the pot that time? That powdery stuff?"

Silence.

"I do hope he pulls out a white rabbit," the general told Sidney. "I love white rabbits—"

"I think personally in a moment the whole thing will explode with a red light, to the wonder and amazement of the spectators," Sidney assured him.

Madame was still prancing up and down, picking at Pierre Kergolo's sleeve.

"What is that thing you put in the pot? Tell me, what is it?"

Pierre Kergolo turned to her suddenly, so that his face was almost touching hers.

"*Magic!*" he breathed in her ear.

Madame seemed to pass in one jump from Pierre Kergolo's side into a chair at the farther end of the kitchen, where she sat frowning impartially at all of us.

"That is ridiculous," she remarked finally, but there was more hope than conviction in her tone.

Pierre Kergolo went on stirring for a long time, silently. Every once in a while he glanced sidewise at Madame with a look of profound mockery on his extraordinary countenance. He was, I am convinced, a consummate actor. At last he slammed the ladle against the pot with a clang which brought us all to the edge of our chairs.

"The *louzou* is ready," he announced.

"But what is it for, your famous *louzou?*" Madame asked him. "I do not require a *louzou*, I!"

"It is for the cow," Pierre Kergolo explained.

"Well, for example!" Madame cried. "For the cow! He has made a *louzou* for the cow now! What next then?"

"You must rub the *louzou* every two hours on the cow's horns," he prescribed.

Madame hit the ceiling.

"Every two hours I must rub that concoction on the cow's horns?" she sputtered. "No, but really, what do you take me for, Pierre Kergolo? I will do no such thing! She can do very well without *louzou*, my cow. I will do no such thing, do you hear?"

"Then the cow will die. That is all." Pierre Kergolo sighed.

"That is ridiculous," Madame remarked for the third time that night, but now there was neither hope nor conviction in her tone.

"Suit yourself."

"DO NOT be stupid, Pierre Kergolo! You cannot expect me to rub *louzou* every two hours on the cow's horns—why not on the barn door! A grown woman like me! That is good for children, but I—I will do no such thing—"

"Then the cow will die," Pierre Kergolo repeated. "It is nothing to me."

"Ah, most surely it is nothing to you!" Madame exclaimed, remembering certain other features of this transaction. "And it was nothing to you when you sold me the cow that she was capable of having the milk fever. Do not forget that you sold that cow, Pierre Kergolo!"

Pierre Kergolo went to the door and opened it before replying.

"Do not forget that you bought her," he observed, and then he smiled at Madame—one marvelous, luxurious, scintillating smile, such as I never expect to see duplicated on any human face. It was gone in an instant, and Pierre Kergolo was gone with it.

And, before I knew it, the general was gone after him.

"Hey!" he exclaimed. "I bet he's got some good dope for corns—"

Well, Sidney and I were so busy laughing at Madame, standing there in front of the pot, chattering away in Breton, that we forgot all about the general until some moments had passed. Then it occurred to me that he had not returned, and yet I had heard Jules Picot start the car and go off.

"Here! What do you suppose the general's doing?" I asked Sidney.

"Pierre Kergolo's probably magicked him into a corn plaster," he suggested. "I don't know. Let's go look for him—hello, what's that?"

I listened. We all listened.

"Bluh!" the sound came once more, from the courtyard apparently. "Bluh—*bluh*—bluh!"

"Hooray!" Sidney shouted. "The calf's loose—and they talk about quiet life in the country—"

But the calf was not loose. That is to say, he was loose in so far as he was no longer parked in the outhouse where we had left him, but when we came tumbling out into the courtyard we found him securely, if tumultuously, fastened—as it were—by the tail to the general. I could not say for certain whether the calf was pulling the general or whether the general was pulling the calf. In any event very little progress was being made by either party.

"Bluh!" the calf was braying, or bleating, or whatever it is calves do. "Let go my tail before my lady mother gets after you—"

"Pop-eyed calf! . . . Loose in the courtyard—" The general was panting. "Stepped on my toe. . . . Don't stand there—laughing like goats. . . . January Christmas! . . . Wish my—pop-eyed aides could—see me—now—"

IT WAS unfortunate, perhaps, that General Manet, commanding the French zone, should have arrived just at that moment. At least I suppose he arrived at that moment—for all I know he may have been there for some time—at any rate the first thing we were made aware of was an extremely scandalized Boston voice raised to heaven.

"Why, *general!*" said the voice. "Where has the general been all night?"

"Where have I been? . . . I've been—

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to the circus. . . . I've— Oh, it's *you!*"

It was. There they all were, filling up the courtyard with spurs, and chin straps, and all the rest of it. The general's aides, immaculate figures in haughty white collars, and General Manet and *his* aides—smiling broadly behind decorously gauntleted hands—and Oswald, and Lord knows who all besides. General Manet had gone looking for our general, and our general's aides had gone looking for General Manet, and Oswald had gone looking for the aides, and they had all met Jules Picot on the road—and it was all very complicated and improbable, but here they were.

Well, well!

The calf was removed. The civilian population, as it were, retired into the background. Every one stood around on one foot and tried to think of something to say. I believe the general, for once, was just the least bit embarrassed. His aides, certainly, were profoundly shocked. Solemn young men, who knew their general's duty and tried to do it for him. It quite obviously did not include chasing calves in the presence of a French headquarters staff.

"Pardon me, but the general has some mud on his nose," I heard one of them say. Dreadful young men!

It was Sidney who saved the day. Sidney was invaluable in such social emergencies, since mere solemnity of occasion always left him essentially unimpressed. He knew General Manet, of course—Sidney knew every one—and what was more important, General Manet knew him.

"Good evening, my general," Sidney addressed him. "You have come just too late!"

"Ah, it is you, my little one," General Manet beamed at him. "And for what have I come just too late?"

"My general, you should have been here half an hour ago to sit with us on a cow's head—"

"Well, for example! At my age—"

"Yes, Manet, the pop-eyed cow had milk fever," our general cut in impulsively, and then for ten minutes he and Sidney and old Manet were hard at it, recapitulating the events of the night. It was plain to see that our general was making a great hit with the French contingent. The "pop-eyed aides" were horrified, but even they had the grace to laugh at his account of the *louzou.*

"Well, I have to go to bed sometime!" General Manet exclaimed finally. "Do you come with us, my little Walsh?"

"No, my general," Sidney excused himself. "I and my companion, we await our automobile, which is transporting the magician to his home. We will probably spend the night here."

"Good! Then let us go, if you are ready, gentlemen—"

The last I saw of our general, he was leaning out of Manet's car, waving frantically to Sidney.

"Don't forget now," he was saying. "Be sure and let me know."

"All right, sir, I will."

It was always that way with Sidney. He was constantly meeting kings, and generals, and "brass hats" of all kinds, and parting from them with his pockets full of invitations to spend a year with them in Lithuania, or visit them aboard their yachts, or whatever. Probably because he was not at all like the "pop-eyed aides."

MADAME put us in a little whitewashed room filled with spindly Breton furniture, and adorned with a very gaudy picture representing the martyrdom of St. Sebastian. I, for one, was ready to call it a night, and seek the smothering security of my enormous feather bed—the Breton kind in a closet, the doors of which you may tightly close and suffocate to your heart's content.

But it was not yet to be. It seemed to me I had hardly passed into an agitated dream, peopled with calves and assorted generals, when Sidney was shaking me by the shoulder.

"Don't say a word," he told me. "Come to the window."

Well, I did as I was told. Sidney usually had pretty good reasons for his actions. I joined him at the window, and immediately it dawned on me what it was that he was to let the general know. Our window looked out on the back, toward the barn. I reached it just in time to see Madame passing through the barn door. In one hand she held a lantern, and in the other Pierre Kergolo's pot of *louzou.*

"What do you bet tomorrow she swears she didn't do it?" Sidney whispered.

She did.

As for the cow, you will be glad to know she got well, whether because of the *louzou*, or in spite of it I cannot say. Oh—and the general's medal, I was almost forgetting that. Sidney, who was present at the ceremony long afterward, told me about it. They gave our general a medal, and old Manet himself pinned it on, with the usual accompaniment of brotherly kisses, while the French band played:

There goes the general walking by,
With a hump on his back and a squint in his eye.

The citation read in part as follows:

"Has always shown a lively interest in the welfare of the civilian population in his district, and has, on occasion, rendered energetic assistance in his own person. . . ."

Sidney swears that every one kept a straight face, which I doubt. Oh, yes, the "pop-eyed aides," of course!

## Coming in November

Besides the new serial, "The Doctor Disagrees," by Robert A. Simon (see announcement on page 99), there will be—

### *A Complete Novel*

**The King's Table** By Hugh Randolph
A prodigal returns and finds his scheming cousin playing an old theme with new variations

### *And Seven Short Stories*

**Interlude** By Octavus Roy Cohen
A level head discovers an effective way to cool hot heels. The story of a business girl who married a jazz king

**Their Island** By Arthur Mills
The adventurous Volstock goes on a treasure quest and meets the gods of the temple

**Ex-Has-Been** By Sam Carson
When Mose bought the eleven-year-old he proved himself a possessor of the sixth sense—horse sense

**His Son's Dad** By Jonathan Brooks
The football coach may have been right about playing safe, but David Emerson knew the advantage of taking a chance

**Pictures** By Laurie York Erskine
An eastern tenderfoot finds that the West is more alive than he imagined

**A Rich Man's Son** By Frances R. Sterrett
From speedster to grocery store is a long jump, but a certain young man does it and comes up smiling

**The White Flower** By Margery Williams
A dying man's dream and a woman's foresight combine to make a story of unusual appeal

And the serial, "The Sea Horses," a story of conflicting emotions by Francis Brett Young

November *EVERYBODY'S* Out October 15

### *Eve Is Vindicated at Last*

# The Devonshers

### *Freedom Isn't Everything—as Eve Discovers to Her Sorrow When She Loses Faith in the Man She Loves*

## By Honoré Willsie Morrow

Illustrations by Ernest Fuhr

*Begin this serial with any instalment. The story up to this point is here.*

"ANGUS gave me a long hard look and finally he said: 'Eve never took those horses of mine. It's a good deal more likely that you took 'em. By God, I know you did! You've turned Indian, you blank Sioux, you! You bastard Devonsher!'

"He pulled the Colt from his hip, looking up at me with a crooked grin. I knew in a moment that Angus would get me lynched if he could for a common horse thief. And I stuck my .44 into his grinning mouth."

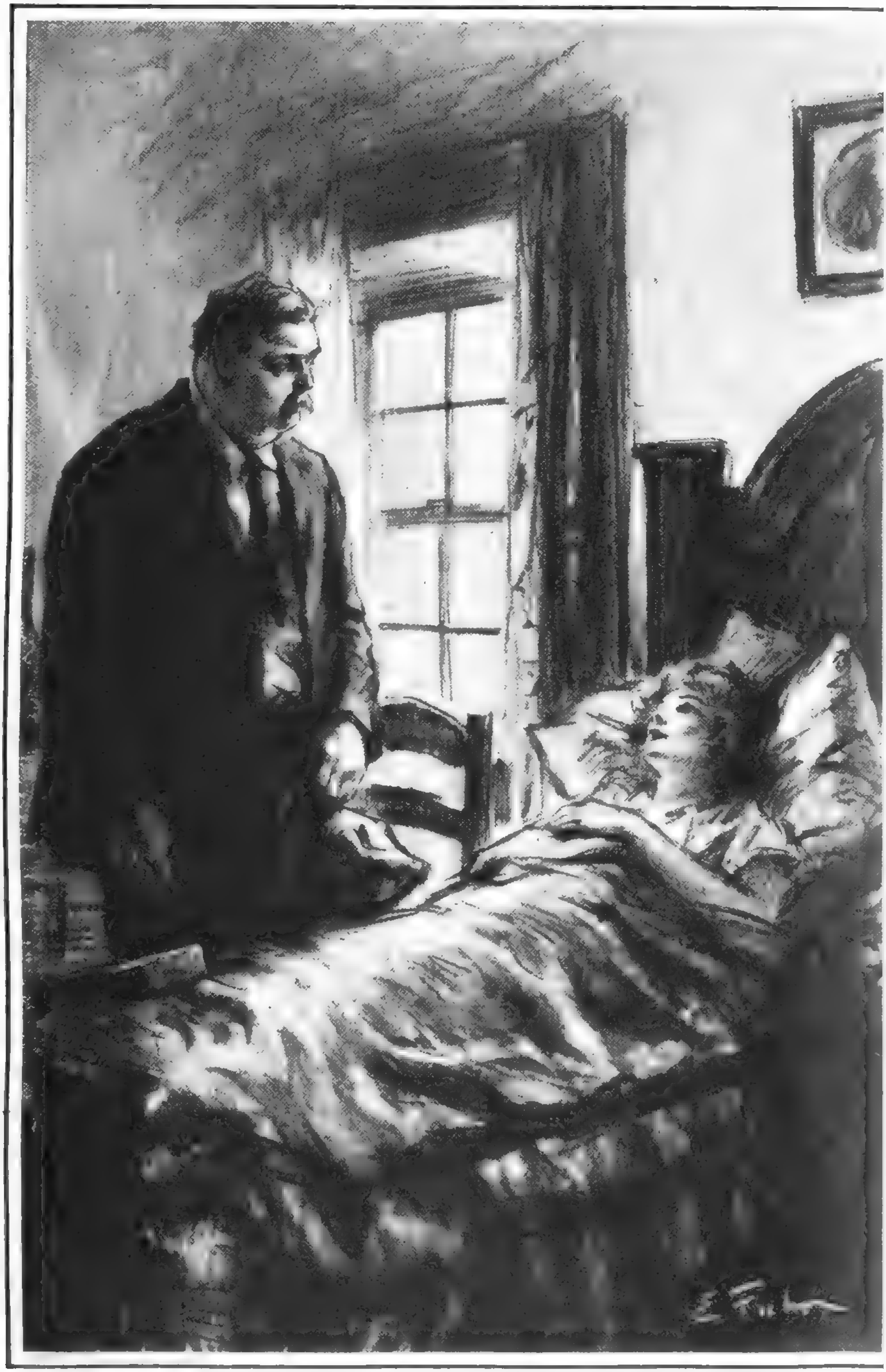
After months and years of soul torment Eve Devonsher found freedom from jail and persecution through Henry Worth's confession.

The Devonsher family in Wyoming sprang from Carter Devonsher, who had come from England as governor of the Oregon country for the Hudson's Bay Company. He was supplanted in office in suspicious circumstances by Sir John Colbaith, and was said to have done all he could thereafter to throw the country to the United States. From this cloud over their name and from a secret blackmail Carter and his son suffered all their lives; and his granddaughter Eve, living in the village of Antelope Basin that had grown up on her grandfather's ranch, still suffered from them when the World War broke out. This despite the fact that they were gifted as leaders of the community and did much for it, especially by starting the famous Devonsher-Arabian breed of horses.

Eve was almost the only one in the community who had an intelligent world view of events and when Major Peter Colbaith of the British Army came to Antelope Basin to purchase Devonsher-Arabians for the Allies she straightway enlisted herself on his side against the all too common profiteering. But she made scarcely a dent in the profiteers' ranks and exposed herself to many indignities. The cumulative effect of these and her fiancé's selfish plea of disability for going to war drove her to throw up her hands and quit, herself starting for France.

Three weeks later Angus Duncan, with whom she had had several bitter quarrels ending in the bitterest of all, over his profiteering, was found shot dead in his branding corral; and when Sheriff Sid Brownell with a posse of Judge Jones and Peter Colbaith found Eve, who was known to have a gun of the unusual bore that had killed Angus, in camp near by, he did not hesitate to bring her back to Antelope Basin. Nor did Judge Jones hesitate to place her on trial.

Sustained only by the faith of Peter, the fine-spirited girl faced months of torture and finally sentence. Then strangely came Henry Worth's confession.



Eve shook her head and a nostalgia for the hills swept over her. "I doubt if Peter ever comes back, Sid."

EVE, with her hand over her eyes, had been listening to Henry in an agony of concentration. But from this point on her mind focused on Peter. What was he thinking?

Henry went on as coolly as if he were talking about a bear hunt.

"I set Rex to guard Angus and keep the coyotes off; then I hustled down the hill to the place where I'd cached the horses, and I ran them up to old Sioux Dick's place in Lost Cañon. He agreed to rebrand the horses for me and keep them hid. Then I hurried back where I'd left the pelts and cached those, and then I got into the wagon and drove back to Antelope Basin. When the sheriff called me in the morning I was in bed and asleep."

"Didn't you risk a good deal, Henry," asked Poindexter, caustically, "for a couple of horses?"

"I am kind of ashamed of the horse-stealing," admitted Henry.

"Why didn't you tell of Eve's shot before?" asked Jim. "You were eager to incriminate her."

"I was afraid of what she'd bring out about me. Anyhow I was sure the jury would free her and I knew I had enough on her to make her marry me."

The lawyer stared at the quarter-breed helplessly, as if the enormity of the situation was beyond his power to handle. Finally he turned to Colonel Johnson and said automatically:

"You may have the witness, sir."

"I don't want him!" exclaimed the colonel emphatically. "Offer him to the sheriff."

Judge Jones spoke suddenly. "One moment, Henry! Have you been in communication with Major Colbaith regarding Devonsher history since the murder?"

"Your Honor," drawled Peter, "I object to that question. Its answer has nothing to do with this murder trial."

"You are requested not to intrude yourself into this matter, Major Colbaith!" exclaimed the judge angrily.

"That's what I desire, really—not to be obtruded into the case," retorted Peter. His face was deeply flushed and his lips twitched.

Eve gazed at him with a growing and entirely new sense of apprehension. After all, who and what was this man to whom she had given the passionate fealty of her heart? A shadow cast by deeds remote from Antelope Basin slowly but none the less surely and darkly began to project itself between Peter and herself. Eve pressed her knuckles hard against her mouth and waited.

Judge Jones, with a baleful look at Peter, turned back to the witness. "Answer my question, Henry."

"Yes, I was in communication with him several times. And I gave him what he wanted. But he never came through like he said he would." Henry's pleasant face slowly hardened to a look so sinister that it pierced through Eve's confusion of thought like a physical blow. "You'd all like to know what I know, especially you, judge. You're as curious as a coyote. Well, you'll find out, when it's too late—and be damned to you. But I'll say this much: All I've done, or Eve's done, is baby work compared with what that Britisher plans to put over."

JUDGE JONES brought his gavel down. "Order!" he shouted, although the courtroom was in complete silence. He turned to the jury. "Members of the jury, unless you wish to hold Miss Devonsher on the matter of the horse-running, I suggest that you permit me to discharge her."

Lame Jack, the stage-driver, who was foreman of the jury, rose and cleared his throat.

"Your Honor, when you called this extra meeting we were almost in agreement about the case. We thought Miss Devonsher ought to be sent up to Rawlins for the minimum sentence for manslaughter. Her stand with us was sure aggravated by the fact that she'd run horses. On the other hand, she hadn't profited a cent by 'em and had made full restitution to the owners. But she did clear the last of the Devonsher-Arabian strain out of here and we think she'd ought to be punished for it. Outside of that, I think the jury all agrees with me, she'd ought to go free."

The stage-driver gave his fellow jurors an inquiring glance and was greeted by many nods and not a dissenting voice.

Colonel Johnson rose suddenly. "Your Honor, may I be permitted to say a word, quite informally?"

"Go ahead, colonel!"

"Well, your Honor, we've all given Miss

Devonsher the very devil of a time. She's paid a thousandfold for all she's done. Let's send her over to the tavern to her mother."

The judge with an uncertain smile looked at Eve, who sat in her old attitude, hand over her eyes. But before he could speak Sid Brownell interjected an order:

"Wait a minute! I claim that right."

The sheriff was standing by Henry now, and looking down at him, he remarked: "I've got a warrant for you, Henry. It's your turn in the cell."

Henry shrugged his shoulders and rose, and there was not a sound in the room save their footsteps as the two men walked past the judge's desk into the passageway. The cell door clanged and Sid returned with Eve's blankets and suitcase. He walked directly over to her.

"All ready, Eve," he said, his golden voice never so gentle.

AS EVE rose, the whole courtroom rose with her, judge, lawyers, jury and spectators, and as she moved uncertainly toward the door, cheer after cheer turned the quiet into pandemonium. But not a soul followed Eve until she and Sid were well out on the Plaza. Even then, as if they realized that she could not have endured a single congratulation, no one came within speaking distance.

Sid was breathing as heavily as if he had just finished a mile run. When they had turned the corner from the courthouse to the road that led by the tavern he said, unevenly: "I don't know as I can make up to you, Eve. But—but even you thought you'd killed him."

"You've nothing to make up, Sid. I wonder if my mother knows yet."

"I guess maybe Doc is with her now. He wasn't in court. I—I kind of thought the major would come home with us. But I guess I scared him off."

Eve did not reply. She was trembling so excessively that all her faculties were concentrated on getting home without asking Sid to carry her. They passed Henry's place. When they were within a stone's throw of the tavern Eve paused.

"If the living-room is full of people," she said, "I'd rather go round the back way."

"Ain't a soul there. Everybody was at the trial. And I'll just station some one here to shoo folks out for a couple of hours."

So Sid dropped the blankets and suitcase within the living-room door and Eve crossed the familiar room, unsteadily, into the kitchen. Lee Fu was washing dishes. He dropped his dripping dish-rag to the floor with a broad grin, as Eve put a shaking hand on his shoulder.

"I told you they couldn't put Missy in jail!" he cackled. "Maybe you eat good supper now?'

Eve smiled and shook her head. "Lee Fu, will you go see if Doc Peabody is with my mother, and if he is will you ask him to come out here?" She was feeling curiously light-headed.

The little doctor rushed across the kitchen and pulled Eve's tall head down to his and kissed her on either cheek.

"Thank Almighty God!" he whispered.

He wiped his eyes, blew his nose and told the maudlin Lee Fu for heaven's sake to pick up the dish-rag! Then he cleared his throat.

"Your mother knows. She expects you sometime tonight. I'll go in and tell her you've come." Then abruptly: "Let me take your pulse, Eve."

Eve put her hands behind her back. "My pulse is splendid. Just let me see mother."

The doctor grunted and turned to the swing door. A moment later he returned and beckoned to Eve.

Mary was sitting up in bed. She lifted both arms to Eve, pausing in the doorway, and Eve crept within their protection as if she were a little child.

Mary was the first to break the silence. "I am quite well now. I feel as if I'd never be ill again."

Eve freed herself from the enfolding arms and, perching on the edge of the bed, devoured her mother with feverish eyes. "I don't feel as if I could ever stir out of your sight again, mother! I don't feel as if I'd ever again have strength or poise enough to go on alone."

"Oh, Eve, don't say that! Not that I want to live an inch apart from you, ever. But you mustn't let this thing you've been through shake your faith in yourself."

Eve seized her mother's hand in her hot grasp. "Mother! Mother! Don't you see? They've broken me! They've shattered all that was left of my pride. They've deprived me of hope and of faith in myself or my future. I'm old. I'm broken."

MARY leaned forward to study Eve's face. Then she said quietly: "The strain has worn you out, but it's not strain that makes you look and speak so. Eve, what of the major?"

"Major Colbaith has turned from me with the rest."

"That's absurd, Eve. He couldn't have. Where is he now?"

Eve shook her head impatiently. "What does that matter! He's only a part of the fate that pursues me."

Mary's happy eyes clouded with trouble. She moved closer to Eve. "It's the strain, dear. Don't you realize that it's all over now—that you're free?"

"Free! Free! Free for what? To creep into some hermitage like old Tom Maine's and lick my wounds and hide my shame!"

"Eve, I want you to go to the door and call the doctor."

"Mother! Has my wailing upset you so? What a brute I am!"

"Call the doctor, Eve," repeated Mary.

Eve rushed to the door and called. A moment later Doc Peabody hurried in. His first look was for Mary. She shook her head.

"Doc, I want you to give Eve something to quiet her nerves and send her to bed."

Eve forced a laugh. "Mother's stooping to trickery! I called you because I thought I'd talked too much to her. I'm quite all right, Doc."

The doctor's reply was to grip her wrist firmly and pull out his watch. Then he laid his ear to her chest.

"Heart is fair, but you're running a temperature. I want you to go to bed at once, Eve."

Eve was about to protest when Lee Fu rapped and put his head in at the door.

"Major Colbaith have to see Missy in gleat hully."

"Not tonight—" the doctor began.

But Mary interrupted. "Go along and see him, Eve. I want to talk to you, Doc."

Eve hesitated. It did not seem possible to her that she could carry on a discussion with Peter. But it was easier to drift out of the door than to decide not to do so. She tossed her hair back from her forehead, pressed her hands to her hot cheeks and went into the living-room.

Peter, in uniform, was standing by the fireplace. There was no one else in the room. He moved slowly toward her, holding out his hand.

"I suppose you can't realize that you are free, Eve," he said. "I want to congratulate you most fervently."

Eve withdrew her hand and slipped into a chair before the empty fireplace. The major seated himself opposite her.

"I'm glad to be out of the cell," she said carefully. It was so very difficult to think coherently. "But of course I'm not free. I'm handcuffed still by the chains my grandfather forged—and by the shame the witnesses thrust on me. I told my mother a moment ago that all that was left in life for me was to crawl off to a hermitage somewhere and lick my wounds and hide my shame."

"I'm sorry," said Peter simply. "I'd hoped the joy of coming home, a free woman, would offset all the other things."

Eve clasped her hands tensely in her lap. She wanted him to go. She wanted him to stay. She wanted him to see with her eyes. She wanted him to hear with her ears. But most of all she longed to know what lay behind the care-worn blond mask of his face.

"Just what was the urgent matter you called about, Peter?"

Peter watched her closely. "I've received a cablegram, forwarded from Cheyenne, asking me to start for the East at once. If I get a dawn start tomorrow I can catch the Limited from Cheyenne tomorrow night. I dislike to reiterate like a silly ass, but I have spoken to the clergyman and he will come in and marry us whenever I send Lee Fu for him."

EVE managed a wan smile. "So I still am a duty to you, Peter! How can you harp on that string now? Or is this another sample of what you British call your muddling diplomacy? You admitted to a great disappointment in me, yet you think I'll marry you after that! And although you were angelically kind to me afterward—oh, Peter, was it kindness! Wouldn't it have been simpler to let me end things then and there? Don't you see that the one fact I have clung to through the trial, the one thing to which my pride might cling, was your admiration for me, that when that went the final savor of living went, too? I'm not staging a scene. Heaven forbid! We've had too many of them." She pressed her hands against her burning cheeks. "Let me think! What was I saying? I mean what was torturing me so? Peter, how did you gain knowledge of Angus Duncan's papers regarding my grandfather's holdings here? I'm sure I've a right to demand an answer to that?"

Peter was as profoundly agitated as Eve. The sweat stood on his forehead and lips, and his face was haggard as he replied very slowly, "You have the right to ask but I can't answer now."

Eve leaned toward him breathlessly, her great blue eyes on his. "You have been deceiving me!"

"I never have lied to you, Eve."

Eve tossed her hands impatiently.

"Lying is sometimes the least flagrant form of deception, as you very well know! Then you didn't come to Antelope Basin primarily to buy horses?"

"I can't answer that question, Eve."

It seemed to Eve that unless she broke through the stone wall between herself and Peter, she would go mad. She struck blindly. "You are Major Colbaith, I hope!"

"You saw my passport months ago," returned Peter, shortly. "Also"—with an ironical smile—"old Tom Maine said I was the image of my grandfather!"

But for the first time in her life Eve's sense of humor failed her. Still struggling with her whirling, inattentive brain, she asked him in a low voice: "Peter, were you honestly in love with me, or was I, like the horses, only a part of a larger game?"

A slow red crept from Peter's lean jaw to the blond line of his hair. "That's an insulting question, Eve! Insulting to yourself as well as to me."

Eve ignored this. "I see! You have found what you wanted and you are returning to England. Peter, suppose that I'd called your bluff, that I had married you! But of course you are keen, and you knew that, as soon as you'd shown disappointment in me, my pride would save you. My poor, broken pride!"

"You are talking like a woman now," drawled Peter. "Hitherto you've been like a fair-minded lad." His troubled eyes told something of his struggle for words. "Eve, we are not children. Really. Let's state the thing baldly. I loved you for a brilliant, high-minded woman suffering a martyrdom that you assured me was undeserved." Suddenly the drawl broke. His voice rose. "You were the greatest woman in the world to me till this afternoon. But that sort of night-marauding for a woman, Eve—and murder! For you tried to kill Duncan. You must give me time, Eve, to forget the ideal of you and to learn to care for the woman you are."

Eve writhed in her chair. There was a long silence during which she watched the kerosene lamp waltz back and forth on the dining table. When her vision became normal she said, "And still you offer me no explanation of your relationship to Angus Duncan's papers or to Henry Worth." She rose and held out her hand. "I think we'd better end it, now."

Peter stood stiffly before her. "I shall come back," he said, "and shall make you understand, unless you are too angry with me."

"Shall you, indeed!" murmured Eve, politely. If only he would go! If only he would stay! If only the room would not revolve too rapidly before he left it. "I think my mother is calling me," she said, and she hurriedly left him. She closed her mother's door behind her, looked helplessly at Doc Peabody sitting beside Mary's bed, and slowly settled to the floor in a faint.

WHEN Eve returned from the nothingness of the faint, she realized vaguely that she was in her own room, in her own bed, covered with a blanket that had not been in jail with her. The bed and the blanket made a starting-point for mental wanderings that continued for many weary days. Constantly her mind staggered, footsore, back to the bed and to the blanket that had no relation to the cell, nestled for a little time secure in the knowledge of its whereabouts; then, driven by that which it could neither name nor locate, it staggered forth again on the wordless horror of its journeyings through space.

Many of the journeys were made with her father, he always bloody from the open wound in his throat. Together they traveled over burning plains and through heavenly cool forests of gigantic trees, pursuing horses; horses always in travail with stillborn foals. Sometimes turning away from the mare in foal, she would struggle hand to hand with her father, who espied the iron document case just beyond, and she fought him lest he learn the truth.

She took one trip with Tom Maine into the old Antelope Basin country. It was extraordinary how beautiful the Basin was without the town. A man who pursued them for days overtook them as they were going into camp at Antelope Springs. He brandished a sword. He was, he told her, the owner of the hundred thousand acres hereabouts; the Hudson's Bay Company had given it to him for fathering the bastard chief of all the Indians. And he would thank her to remove herself from his territory. Eve was glad to go. She mounted her horse and spurred him to do his utmost. Angus Duncan went with her. At least she thought it was Angus. He kept his elbow thrown up before his face. She insisted that she could not marry him unless she saw his face. And finally he jerked down his arm and she saw the bloody pulp Henry had described. She and Angus, for it was he, wrestled and fought.

She took this trip many times. Once—oh, blessed once!—Peter came limping for miles, a brown speck on a vivid green ocean of grass, and snatched her away from Angus, away from her grief; to a cool sweet circle of cedar trees where he kissed her, then turned from her in horror. There was blood on her face, he told her. But, she protested, it was her father's blood. He laughed at her. Anyhow, he told her, he was the owner of all the land thereabouts and she and her mother must leave it. So for ages she and Mary tramped over mountains of extraordinary, burning beauty, dragging after them a groaning mare.

She journeyed in a covered wagon from Fort Jason into the Wind River country. The wagon was by way of being a schoolroom filled with half-grown boys and girls who on no account were to notice her. Eve's chore was to ignore their ignoring of her and to teach them the whole duty of patriots. Nay, it was more complicated than that. She must teach them patriotism, knowing the while that she believed not a word of what she taught. In despair, she sought to turn their attention to the startling and panoramic beauty of the country through which the covered wagon whirled at airplane speed. And they would not look. Instead, they stared at her with growing horror in their young faces. And they raised a great cry of "Thief! Thief! Thief!" And she fled from the cry. She and Henry Worth and—Peter, Peter who limped and had to be waited for, and whose wounded hand bled.

She slept a long time after this journey. Her pity for Peter had made it an unusually wearing one. She woke from it to see her mother's face bending anxiously over her.

"I'm home again, mother," whispered Eve.

Then for the first time since all these journeyings began Eve heard her mother's voice. "Thank God for that, dear girl!"

"I do—indeed!" It took Eve almost a full minute to bring out the answer, but she achieved it, then fell asleep again.

There were journeys after this but they were of shorter duration and Eve woke more and more often to her mother's face, and finally she came home to the bed and the sweet blue blanket not to wander again. She knew this to a certainty on waking one afternoon and seeing, beside her mother's face, Doc Peabody's, squinting at a thermometer.

"Here I am again!" said Eve feebly. "This time I'm going to stay."

"Yes," agreed the doctor, "after reading this mercury, I'd say you were. Mary, give her some of that beaten white of egg."

But Eve turned her head in weak aversion. "No! If you had been as far as I you'd want real food." She had no idea how closely the two at her bedside were obliged to bend to hear her feeble speech. Nor did she observe the look of triumph that passed between her mother and the doctor.

Many days drifted by with sleep and broth before curiosity roused once more in Eve.

SHE woke one morning just as the sunrise flooded her room. Doc Peabody was dozing in an armchair beside the bed. He needed to have his beard trimmed and his hair cut, but to Eve his face was as the face of an angel. She lay quietly watching him for some moments. Finally he opened his eyes with a start.

"You look so tired," said Eve. "I don't need to be sat up with any more, do I?"

"Not really," replied Doc. "I'd been up all night with the Millers' baby, dropped in to see you on my way home, and fell asleep."

"Poor tired doctor!" murmured Eve. Then she spoke firmly. "How long have I been ill, Doc Peabody?"

"About six weeks."

"What was my illness?"

"Oh, a sort of flu and meningitis and one thing and another. Mostly it was overstrain."

"Where is Henry Worth?"

The doctor's voice was entirely casual. "Up in Rawlins with a life sentence."

"Did Major Colbaith go away?"

"Yes, he received another cable that night and had to leave."

"Doctor, I'd like to see Willy Jones."

Doc Peabody's voice was no longer casual. "Well, you can't. You are to forget the trial and all connected with it."

"You know that's impossible, don't you, Doc?" urged Eve. "My brain is clear now. I can't be my old self until I've planned my future. Willy Jones can help me do that."

"Oh, can he, indeed!" sniffed the doctor. "Very well! You may see him for fifteen minutes today. If there is the slightest depressing effect from his call, he shan't come again for a month."

"Thank you, Doc." Eve's voice was meek but there was a suggestion of the old twinkle in her blue eyes. Then she asked seriously, "Doc, how is mother?"

"Wonderful! She meant it literally when she said nothing would ever matter again if she could have you here at home. While she's been worried about you, she's stood up like a trump and is in good trim."

"I'm thankful!" Eve heaved a sigh of relief. "I wish it wasn't too early for my breakfast."

The doctor chuckled delightedly. "It's not," he said. "Lee Fu is up." And he hurried kitchenward.

That afternoon Judge Jones came in to occupy the chair beside Eve's bed. He patted the long thin hand, that was no longer brown, and said with only a suspicion of hoarseness in his voice:

"Well, Eve! And so I'm allowed to be your first visitor?"

Eve nodded. Her face was all eyes. They no longer burned, but were remote and very blue in their heavy shadows.

"Willy Jones," she began, her voice weak, but steady enough, "you had a dream that such a trial as I was put through would accomplish great things. Are you satisfied?"

"No, not yet," replied the judge. "Only a few of the knots are untied. I'm satisfied as to one thing, though. And that is that you are the best sport in Antelope Basin or anywhere else."

Eve moved her head impatiently. "I don't want compliments. I don't deserve them. What I want to know is, what do I do with my life, now that you all have wrecked it?"

"Why worry about that now?" asked the judge, gently. "When you are well and strong again, you will solve your own problems."

"But don't you see how things have eaten into me, Willy Jones? I can't grow well and strong until my mind is at rest."

"And what would put your mind at rest, Eve, my dear?"

"To forget it all—all the years of my life—culminating in the horror of the trial. Oh, Willy Jones! Willy Jones! You did a frightful thing to me!" And to her own utter chagrin, Eve began to weep and her sobs shook her emaciated body unendurably.

Judge Jones was frightened. "For God's sake, don't cry, Eve—don't! You'll hurt yourself. Doc Peabody will kill me. I'll help you any way I can. Don't, don't take it this way!"

But, the flood-gates once opened, Eve was too weak to close them, and she sobbed on and on until the judge hurried to the door and called the doctor, who was standing by the living-room table, watch in hand. He came swiftly to Eve's bedside and for a moment looked down at her helplessly, his own face working. She had put up a gallant fight ever since he had ushered her into a world which had treated her too harshly. It moved him almost uncontrollably to see these rare tears. Then he set his jaw and spoke sharply.

"Eve! I'm ashamed of you. You've upset the judge and put yourself back a week."

"It—it—will do—Willy—Jones—good to be—upset," sobbed Eve.

"I grant you that," snorted the doctor. "What the devil did you say to the girl, judge?"

"Nothing, Doc! I swear to you, nothing! She wanted to talk seriously and I tried to head her off."

"Well, Eve, of course this ends it!" declared Doc Peabody, handing her a towel with which to dry her tears. "You can't see the judge again for a month."

EVE'S sobs ceased abruptly. "I shall see him tomorrow," she declared. "Don't you see, Doc, there are things I must know before I can be well, mentally or physically."

"I can see," snorted the doctor, "that you've a mighty poor grip on yourself, and I'm going to shut down on any visitors whatsoever."

A vague color came into Eve's cheeks. She ignored the thrust at her will power. But she could not bear the thought of being forbidden to see the people who could help her on her quest.

"I must see people, from now on, Doc! If I break down once in a while and cry, that's my loss and concerns no one else. But I must know! I must!" Her voice rose weakly.

"What must you know, Eve?" asked Judge Jones, gently.

"I must know what was Major Colbaith's real mission here. I must know that. It's life or death to me." Eve looked from one old friend to the other in piteous appeal.

"Yes." Judge Jones's jaw was set. "We must learn that, or the trial was largely abortive. The major returned to England the day after your trial ended. I have been able so far to sweat nothing out of Henry. I doubt if I shall be able to do so. This is Henry's method of getting even. When do you look for Major Colbaith's return, Eve?"

"I have no idea. Perhaps never."

"Aren't you engaged to Major Colbaith, Eve?" asked the judge.

"Not any longer," replied Eve. "When he said good-by to me, I was convinced that I never should see him again."

"Never?" The judge's voice was incredulous and startled.

"Never!" repeated Eve, and to her own consternation she began to sob again.

"Now then, judge!" cried the doctor. "Out you go until tomorrow! Just send Lee Fu in here with the egg-nog he's been coddling for a half-hour.

"I'm glad your mother isn't here," he scolded as the judge disappeared. He pulled the covers around Eve's shoulders as deftly as a nurse. "You'd break her heart. There, that's better!"—as Eve began to wipe her eyes.

Lee Fu shuffled in with the egg-nog and the doctor took it, still talking. "Hand it to me, Lee Fu! There you are, Eve. Take it down. One of the cardinal maxims of medicine is that you can't weep and eat at the same time."

Eve sipped the egg-nog gratefully. As she drank, an overpowering desire to sleep came upon her and the next she knew the lamp in her room was lighted and her mother was bringing in her supper. If Mary had learned of Eve's breakdown that afternoon she thought best not to mention it. She talked at length of taking Eve to camp as soon as the doctor would permit, far up toward the crest of Antelope Peak. But for the first time in her life, Eve did not respond to a camping suggestion. She had rather, she told her mother, remain in the tavern where people couldn't stare at her. And Mary, with a little, pitying clearing of her throat, dropped the subject.

Eve was feeling decidedly stronger, however, the next day and when Judge Jones appeared in the mid-afternoon she was propped up in bed with pillows and was able to remain so during the fifteen minutes of the judge's visit.

"How is Sid?" was the first question Eve asked.

"Sid's an unhappy man," replied the judge. "He says this trial has ended any chances he might ever have around here politically. And he says his two womenfolks are like two sulky wildcats. I can't see that he did anything but his full duty by them, though."

"Nor I," agreed Eve. "Judge, where is the iron document case?"

"Sid has it. He doesn't want to give it up to any one but you, and I've respected his desires."

Eve spoke uneasily. "I do hope he's hidden it where neither Minnie nor her mother can find it."

"I hope so. He swears that he has.

Would you like to have me tell him to bring it to you?"

"Yes, please. Tell him to come in at this time tomorrow. It seems to me that's the first thing for me to do—to get to the bottom of that mess of papers."

"But you read them all once, did you not?"

"I supposed that I had. But now I know that Angus held out a number of them for future pressure on me."

"He must have found it very discouraging to try to blackmail a cool-headed customer like you."

Eve smiled. "You're applying a curious epithet to me, Willy Jones."

"It wouldn't seem curious to any one who saw you come through the trial. Would you like me to be with you when you read the stuff, Eve?"

"I'd rather be alone," replied Eve. "But afterward I shall want to talk things over with you. Were there other things developed by Henry Worth that I ought to know?"

"What test am I to use to discover what are the kind of things you ought to know?" The judge was smiling, but his gray eye was serious.

"Things that will help me plan my future," replied Eve, slowly. "You see, since the trial nothing ever can be the same with me again. Either I'll go away to France and never come back or I'll stay here and try to make restitution. Fish or cut bait, as you said yourself."

"What sort of restitution, Eve?"

"I don't know, judge. That is one of the things I must learn."

JUDGE JONES tapped his knee thoughtfully as though going back to the recent history of Henry Worth. "After his confession, as you heard it, there was very little questioning. His story was full and clear and obviously true. We checked up what we could. We found the cache of beaver pelts and Sioux Charley confessed that he'd rebranded the horses, and gave us the name of the dealer in Cheyenne to whom he sold the horses for Henry. It was the dealer who'd acted for Major Colbaith. Minnie will be reimbursed for the horses by the sale of some of Henry's effects. Of course, all this isn't helpful to you. I'm just checking evidence aloud. I talked to him about his statement that Angus had accused the major of offering a sum of money for the aforesaid document and he insisted that he had been telling the truth, and that he was sure Angus had been, too."

"What a mess!" murmured Eve. Then she said more clearly: "Is Sid very sure he has that iron case safe? The major is an extremely efficient person."

"Well," said the judge, "that will be a simple matter to settle. Personally, I don't think Major Colbaith worked that way."

"Don't you?" Eve's face was eager. Then it returned to melancholy. "After all, you didn't think a person like me could do what I did."

"Ah, yes! I did think so. You were a different case. You'd been tortured into an abnormal frame of mind. Major Colbaith was never anything but calm and clear of purpose. It's hard for me to like an Englishman, but I'll admit he stood by you like a thoroughbred."

Eve made no comment on this but after a moment she said: "I don't want to pry into his war activities. But his relationship to my family I must understand or go mad. If I can once understand that, perhaps all that I have endured can be made to stand for something worth while. Otherwise life is a shapeless chimera, better ended than begun. You started something, Willy Jones, that you'll have to help me finish."

"I intend to. Do you know his London address?"

"No. If you write to him send the letter to his regiment."

"I'll do so," replied the judge. "And I've other plans which I'll share with you later. I'm going to move along now. You look tired and I don't want Doc Peabody after me again."

Eve bade him good-by and watched him go with a sudden curious little smile. Would Peter, secured as far as she knew by the authority of the British Empire, be impregnable to the boring from without of this strange old frontier lawyer?

The sheriff arrived promptly the next afternoon. He was wearing the black coat and tie which he wore at funerals and other functions where he was expected to sing. He slipped a package from under his arm to the foot of Eve's bed, then came to her side and shook hands with her.

"My lord, Eve, but you are thin! And say, you don't know how much you look like your grandmother when she had her last sickness."

"That ought to cheer me up if anything would!" exclaimed Eve, with a faint twinkle. "How are you, Sid?"

"Just medium fair. Doc tells me you're out of danger now, but I swear you look bad to me!"

"Oh, I'll be getting up, tomorrow, perhaps." Eve inspected her thin hands, scornfully. "Looks don't count. . . . What sort of thing do they say about me, Sid?"

"Well, you see, Eve, the trial, while it settled who killed Angus and who ran horses, opened up a lot of topics that will have to be settled before folks know exactly what to think of you. Why, this whole county can't do anything now but debate on what Carter Devonsher really did to Sir John Colbaith and what was the major's real job over here. They are mostly all sore about your running those horses, but they aren't talking so much about you as they are about Major Colbaith. There's a whole crowd thinks he's a German spy. He'll have rough sledding when he comes back."

"I doubt if he ever comes back."

"Then I suppose you'll go to him?" blurted Sid.

Eve shook her head. "That's ended, Sid."

"What's the matter?"

"It's ended!" repeated Eve. "But that doesn't say I shan't do all I can to clear up his attitude toward the Devonshers."

"That man cares a lot about you, Eve. Why, when he came to get his little Lizzie out of the garage the morning he left, he put his hand on my shoulder and told me to watch over you just as my father had watched over old Carter. And what's more, I told him I would."

Eve looked at Sid's tense stout face affectionately. His clothing smelled of sunshine and of horses and for the first time since her illness Eve was swept by a nostalgia for the hills. But she did not speak of this to Sid, nor did she comment on his report of the major's thought for her.

"WE ALL were besmirched by the trial, Sid. I shall not feel at rest until we have cleared up the worst of the insinuations. Did you bring the document box?"

"Yes, there she is on the foot of the bed. Eve, I haven't read none of the stuff. I'm too dumb-headed to get what it meant straight and I didn't want to torture myself any more than I have been with any more half-understandings. You go through the stuff and tell me what you make of it."

He put the box on the table by Eve's bed. She looked at it distastefully "Where did you find it, Sid?"

"You know that big old pulpit Bible of the Duncans' that set under the mirror in their sitting-room? Well, they had lifted up the top cover and had cut a square hole right out of the middle of the leaves. It was four or five inches deep and twelve by fourteen inches square, leaving a border all around so that when the lid was closed it looked like an ordinary book. The hole just fitted this document case and the clasp on the outside of the Bible had a little padlock onto it. The key was on Angus's watch chain."

"An appropriate hiding-place!" exclaimed Eve. "You'd better leave me alone, Sid, while I read this. If I want you, I'll send for you."

Left alone, Eve did not procrastinate. She lifted the lid of the iron box and began her task. The papers were yellow but they had been handled with great care and were in good condition. She began by rereading the confession which Sir John Colbaith had forced her grandfather to write:

> This statement is made by me to my secretary, Hugh Duncan, because of a promise extorted from me at the sword's point by Sir John Colbaith. After I left Fort Jason, for good, I came down to Antelope Basin, laid out my ranch house and left Duncan to see that it was built. Then I took Jackson Brownell, my body-servant, and an Indian guide and started for California. I reached the village of San Francisco after a long and very heavy trip and the day after my arrival I went to Captain Frémont's headquarters at Sutter's Fort. I had met Frémont on his surveying expedition through Oregon Territory a few years previous and I knew that he represented the United States Government on the Pacific Coast. I knew that while England would do nothing flagrant to take possession of California, she was employing every possible indirect method to that end. I knew that Sir John Colbaith was in constant communication by runner, via Vancouver, with Commodore Hoskins, whose purpose was to take possession of San Francisco Bay for Great Britain. I had with me complete copies of all the transactions between Sir John and Commodore Hoskins, between Sir John and the Hudson's Bay Company's Head Office, between Sir John and the British Foreign Secretary during the time he and I both were

occupying Fort Jason. I had not ordered these copies made, but when I found that Hugh Duncan had made them, I took possession of them. The British had a plan whereby San Francisco Bay, California Alta and the Territory of Oregon were to be simultaneously taken over by Great Britain the moment Mexico could be chivvied by Sir John's agents and Commodore Hoskins into a certain overt act against the British landholders in California.

These documents I showed to Captain Frémont. I told him that the preponderance of Americans over British numbers in Oregon would decide the nationality of Oregon Territory in the next few months. He was able to rush back to Oregon several hundred prospectors and also to force the Mexicans into an overt act that anteceded the British plans by a week. I returned to Antelope Basin. Herewith the copies of said documents made by Hugh Duncan.

(*Signed*) CARTER DEVONSHER, *per H. D.*

Eve laid the yellowed paper on the bed beside her, her pale face flushing. The sense of shame was quite as keen now as it had been on the first reading. She wondered what the second letter which Sir John had forced from her grandfather could have contained of greater ignominy than this.

After a moment she began to go through the other papers in the box. The next letter was written on legal cap, a beautiful even hand in purple ink. This too Eve had read before.

Fort Vancouver, Aug. 16, 1847.

Carter Devonsher, Esq.
Fort Jason on Sioux River.

DEAR SIR:

The baby is now a month old. He is a strong child and will be able to endure the journey back to Fort Jason very well in another month. I was very sick. Bearing a white child, it seems, is less easy than bearing one of my own race.

Jackson Brownell has told me that you are very uneasy about Madame Devonsher. He says that she has shut herself away from you, that she has been heard weeping in her room. She always was very kind to me. She has a kind heart. Could you not talk to her and give her a better understanding of the great love I have in my heart for you? She has no child. Why would not she welcome this child of yours? You plan, you said, to give this baby learning like mine and money so that he need never live with my tribe.

I do not wish Jackson Brownell to say he is the father of my child. I do not wish to marry the Rev. Elias Worth. He looks like an old mule. Jackson Brownell says he'd rather have to do with a she-devil than a squaw. It is true that he has to do only with his wife. He is a miserable kind of a man.

I wish to come home to Fort Jason proud and free with my little son. But I will do what you tell me to do. Write and tell me what you wish me to do. Doctor Peabody took care of me. He was kind to me. He tried to make me say that you were the father. I told him the other Englishman was. I meant Sir John Colbaith. After that he didn't ask me any more. I hope Madame Devonsher is not very angry at me. She has been kind.

(*Signed*) SARAH RYE-FIELD.

The third letter was labeled "Copy" and was in Hugh Duncan's wonderful copper-plate hand. Eve had not seen it before.

Antelope Basin, Oct. 12, 1850.

SIR:

Mr. Devonsher wishes me to say to you that the fact that he is no longer a British subject gives him as great satisfaction as it does you—that the thought of being a fellow countryman of yours would be sufficient to cause him to expatriate himself had you not already accomplished that matter for him by your dastardly report to the Foreign Secretary. He wishes me also to say that your claims or the claims of the Hudson's Bay Company to the Antelope Basin Grant are absurd and he begs that you will not annoy him by further correspondence.

(*Signed*) HUGH DUNCAN,
Sec. to Carter Devonsher, Esq.

To Sir John Colbaith, Calcutta.

The next letter, also labeled "Copy," was also new to Eve:

Antelope Basin, May 2, 1852.

SIR:

Do you not as yet feel satisfied by your accomplishments? You have robbed me of my good name in England so that I never can return to my home. You have taken my British citizenship from me. You deprived me of the governorship here. You destroyed me with the Hudson's Bay Company. You now seek to show that my title to my property here is false. Sir, the only chance you have to get title to land in Antelope Basin is either to buy it or to negotiate some from your bastard son, John Worth, who is the infantile owner of some thousands of acres hereabouts. Sir, two can play at this game of defamation.

(*Signed*) CARTER DEVONSHER.

To Sir John Colbaith, London.

The next letter was an original in her grandfather's difficult hand.

En route to Portland,
June 12, 1860.

MY DEAR WIFE:

Ever since leaving you a week ago I have been thinking about our last conversation together. I am making a longer camp here to have a broken waggon wheel mended and am taking this opportunity to send a letter back to you by young Tom Maine, who is going to summer in Antelope Basin.

Your continued illness is a great grief and a constant reproach to me. You are a brave spirit but in body too weak for pioneering. When I think of the home from which I took you and of the isolation of the life in which I keep you I could kill myself for the blundering fool I am. I am that at every point, my dear wife! Since the birth of our son I have considered his heritage and what you said on Wednesday only serves to strengthen my own estimate of myself.

You say that Doctor Peabody has told you that you may not live to raise the boy. He should not have told you that. It can only increase your other anxieties, while it fills me with complete hoplessness for the future. What shall I do without your frail presence in the room you so seldom leave? You can have no idea of how the thought of you is a constant restraint on my wild tempers. You still believe that, because of certain episodes at Fort Jason, I do not love you whole-heartedly and with a high mind. Not with your high mind. No. It would be in no man to attain to that. But with a whole heart. Yes, a thousand times, yes. Those other matters belonged to a bestial side of me that I've never, thank God, let you see, and that now has left me. Jocelyn, the only goodness in me is my unending love for you. Oh, do not leave me! Do not!

I shall sell what land I can to the British Stock Raising Company and put the money in the bank to accumulate against David's education. If you insist I will agree to send him back to Oxford. But think well what a dreary prospect for the lad in the face of the reputation that has been given me in England.

I wish that I could have given Grey Bull ranch to David as you wanted me to. But Duncan already had it. You are right to distrust him. But I am too deep in his toils ever to be free, until he strips me. The Antelope Springs ranch I shall deed to David as well as the one I gave him the day he was born.

Jocelyn, I wish you could love these hills as I do. In them you would find solace for much that you have suffered.

God bless you, my dear wife!

Your loving husband,

CARTER DEVONSHER.

EVE laid this letter down and stared for a long time out of the window through which she could see the long suave line of Sioux Hog Back. "Poor soul!" she said at last. "Poor soul! I can't hate you any more. I wish Angus had showed me that before."

She took up what remained of the bundle of papers. There was a large quantity of deeds, bills and receipts, that had been executed while Carter had been factor at Fort Jason. Eve studied them carefully but could make little of them. She believed that they must have a sinister significance in relation to her grandfather or Hugh Duncan would never have purloined and kept them. But she did not know how to interpret them. Perhaps Judge Jones would be able to do so.

There was, however, an understandable memorandum in Hugh Duncan's hand, dated August 4, 1840:

Antelope Basin Grant. Old Spanish Claim. One hundred thousand acres approximately, suitable for fur-raising on large scale. Negotiations by Hudson's Bay Company for purchase begun this date.

This note evidently had been torn from some document, perhaps a map. Eve put the papers together slowly. So few and so fragile, she thought, and with such hellish possibilities within them for making trouble. Hugh Duncan undoubtedly would have written Sir John Colbaith of the collection. What did Peter know? Why, after the varied dénouements of the trial, had he still been secretive? And why, oh, why must she let his secretiveness hurt her so!

Mary brought in the lamp and looked from the iron box to Eve's face.

"You've started a temperature again, Eve! I knew you would. For heaven's sake let me burn that mess!"

"No!" exclaimed Eve. "Some day, please God, but not now! We'll go clean to the bottom of grandfather's crookedness first. And we'll find out whether or not Sir John Colbaith was crooked, too."

"And incidentally make yourself a nervous wreck," declared Mary.

"I'm that now," replied Eve. "This is the operation that may cure me." And while her mother made her ready for the night, she continued to ponder on the contents of the box.

The next morning she was allowed to dress and sit up for a couple of hours. During this time Judge Jones appeared, full of curiosity about Eve's findings. He wanted to take the box to his office but Eve shook her head.

"Don't even trust me, eh?" The judge's eye twinkled.

"I don't trust anybody." Eve's voice was obstinate.

Judge Jones changed the subject, abruptly. "I wrote to Major Colbaith today, asking him if he planned to return to Wyoming. Eve, why don't you let your mother and Sid take you up into the Forest Reserve to get well?"

"Mother hates camping and I'm not going out for the world to stare at."

"Nothing to stare in the Reserve but bear and deer."

"But I've got to cross the Plaza to get there." Eve's eyes were on the clouds sailing above Sioux Hog Back.

The judge moved a little uncomfortably in his chair, his eye on Eve's profile. Finally, he said: "You know, Eve, you aren't getting the right reaction to all this. There is no reason why you should slink away from the people in Antelope Basin."

Eve looked at him with a skeptical lift of her eyebrows. "You may be saying what is really in your mind, Willy Jones, but I doubt it."

The judge gave a short laugh. "All right, Eve! Have it your own way. What I'm thinking is this: that unless you throw off, once and for all, the cowardice that has cursed your family, all the cumulative suffering you've known will be sterile."

"What possible good would it do me to go up to the Reserve?" demanded Eve.

"It wouldn't do the average person any good at all, but it will give you new vision. You've got some long hard thinking to do to put yourself right. You'll do it best on the trail."

"Of course, I haven't the strength for it now!" protested Eve.

"I'm not sure but getting you up into the peaks again is the only way to give you strength. More than that, Doc Peabody agrees with me."

Eve's eyes suddenly showed suspicion. "Have you a particular reason for wanting to hurry me away from Antelope Basin, Willy Jones?"

"No, I haven't!" snapped the judge. "What's more, I'm going to leave you till you develop confidence in me," he added, rising in a dignified manner.

Eve's glance was whimsical. "It will be a long parting, I fear, judge!"

But the old lawyer was offended and slammed the door after himself.

Eve laughed suddenly and went to bed until mid-afternoon, when her mother again established her in the armchair by the window.

"I WONDER," said Mary, "if you'll be comfortable here for a half-hour while I go out for some air. Lee Fu can hear you if you ring this bell."

"Yes, do go!" exclaimed Eve. "I long to get out into the corral myself. I want to sit on the sunny side of the alfalfa stack."

"It's pretty cold for that until you're stronger," said her mother, tucking a blanket over Eve's knees and closing the door as softly as the judge earlier in the day had slammed it.

Thus was the stage cleared for the appearance of Jane Worth Brownell and her daughter Minnie.

They came in quietly, about ten minutes after Mary had left. Eve, who had been staring out of the window, turned to look at them, startled and troubled to what she told herself was an unreasoning degree.

"You needn't look that way!" exclaimed Mrs. Brownell. "We just wanted to talk things over with you."

"I'm not strong enough yet for this!" protested Eve. "Lee Fu shouldn't have let you in."

"Lee Fu doesn't know we are in," said Minnie.

"Surely you both said all there was to say at the trial." Eve leaned back weakly in her chair.

"Land, you have been sick, Eve!" cried Mrs. Brownell. "You look like something the cat brought in. Well, not to beat about the bush, this time we come asking favors of you. We want you to straighten Sid out for us. It used to be he'd do what we told him. But he's been on the warpath ever since the trial. We want you to call him off."

Eve stared at her old inquisitor with an expression at once incredulous and sardonic.

"Oh, I know!" Mrs. Brownell tossed her head. "You're thinking we have a lot of nerve. And I'll admit we wouldn't have come only we're desperate. And we can return the favor, too. We aren't asking something for nothing. You agree to make Sid behave himself and we'll tell you something you'd give your eyeteeth to know."

"What is Sid doing?" asked Eve, moving her head restlessly on the cushion.

"He says he's going to interfere with Minnie's inheriting the ranch from Angus; says Angus's grandfather blackmailed it away from the Devonshers and that Minnie's got to let you have it. He says he's got plenty for Minnie and me and the baby."

"You needn't worry!" exclaimed Eve. "Nothing could induce me to take that ranch. I'd feel as if a curse followed it."

Something almost like gratitude showed on the faces of the two women, and Minnie blurted out: "I overheard Major Colbaith talking with Henry and I'll tell you about it. He said—"

Suddenly Eve sat erect. "Don't tell me! Don't you dare to tell me. I've heard all the terrible things about my relatives and friends that I can endure. The mere beginning, 'I overheard,' is enough to drive me mad."

She stared at her visitors, her blue eyes wide and protesting.

"You don't want to hear?" Minnie's voice was skeptical.

"No, I don't. I can't bear any more."

"But I overheard Sid tell Judge Jones you were going to—"

"There you go again! 'I overheard.' Don't you do anything, Jane Brownell, but listen at keyholes?" Eve was so exasperated that she trembled.

"I wasn't at a keyhole. I was at an upstairs window, sewing, and he was talking in the open door below. Could I help that?"

"Being you, I don't suppose you could." Eve sighed and turned back to the mountain lying serenely beyond her window.

"If you think I'm going to be under obligations to you, you are mistaken, Miss Eve Devonsher." Minnie spoke rapidly. "He told Henry he wanted proof that your grandfather got his land by fraud and said he'd pay for it. And he said—"

"That's enough, Minnie!" Eve lifted a thin white hand and pointed toward the door. "Both of you, go without another word."

Eve's voice held the note of command that always cowed Minnie, and both women left, without a sound. Eve watched the door swing shut. Then, clasping and unclasping her shaking hands, she sobbed aloud. "Peter! Peter! I never shall be able to do it! I never can bring myself to unearth your broken faith."

Her mother returning a few moments later found Eve huddled on the bed, sobbing weakly. She could not discover the cause of the tears, so contented herself with cuddling Eve as if she had been a baby until she fell asleep.

EVE slept until roused, two hours later, by the noise of the mail stage arriving. Her mother, who had been sitting beside her, hurried out for Eve's supper. It seemed to Eve, waiting for her mother's return, that Lee Fu must have been making for her supper something of an extraordinarily elaborate nature. A half-hour slipped by. Eve finally rose, tottered to the washstand and, having made a trembling toilet, established herself in the armchair. As the door finally opened she looked up with a deprecatory smile to receive her mother's scolding for not having remained in bed.

But the smile faded, for her mother, tray in hand, was followed by a man, a stranger. He was slender and fair, and an empty left sleeve was tucked into his coat pocket. As he came into the circle of lamplight Eve saw that he was not over thirty although his haggard face was deep-lined.

"Eve," said her mother, placing the tray on the little table, "this is Major Colbaith's cousin, Captain Charles Andrews."

Eve offered a thin hand to Captain Andrews, who stood looking down at the white face with its frame of glorious hair. "Your mother tells me how very ill you have been. I would not intrude had she not assured me it was quite the right thing to do."

"It is right, of course." Eve pointed to a chair. "Sit down, captain. Have you had your supper?"

"Yes, thank you. Your mother kindly allowed me to talk to her while I ate. I can't help the feeling that time is very precious."

"Has something happened to Major Colbaith?" asked Eve, ignoring the cup of soup her mother offered her.

"I don't know, Miss Devonsher. That's what I have come to ascertain, if I could. He cabled to his chief in London from Cheyenne, six weeks ago, that he was leaving then for Washington and would sail on the first transport available. He cabled from New York a month later telling them the boat on which he was sailing. That boat arrived after an amazingly short and untroubled trip. But he had never been aboard her. After a week of effort on the part of his office to locate him, his family was notified. An old great-aunt and myself represent Peter's family. I was only just recovering from an amputation but—" He paused impressively. "Peter must be found."

Eve watched him intently as he carefully picked his words.

"Peter left the Prince George Hotel in New York on the night his boat sailed, but he had with him a ticket for Rawlins purchased for him by the hotel porter. So I came on to Rawlins. It's quite a longish trip across your states!" He smiled for the first time and Eve liked his smile. "I learned in Rawlins yesterday that Peter had left for Antelope Basin five days ago. I took stage passage this morning and here I am."

"After having heard an Iliad and an Odyssey of a day's length from the stage-driver who was foreman of the jury!" Eve's smile was very sweet. "And you thought it best to come on here, even after Lame Jack had told you the major had not been seen here?"

"Yes, Miss Devonsher. He had started for this place. There seemed nothing for me to do but to come here for information and advice. Can you give me any?" He looked at Eve with a mixture of admiration and anxiety in his blue English eyes.

"No," replied Eve slowly. "No! I have not seen Peter, nor have I heard from him since he left here the night I was taken ill." Suddenly she leaned toward the Englishman, a new strength in her voice. "Captain, do you believe that there is such a thing as divine guidance?"

"Yes," replied Captain Andrews. "You do, if you've come alive out of France."

Eve nodded. "Captain, I have been very ill. I have had very little desire to get well. The future has been a blank to me. But since you came into the room I've suddenly seen a glimmer of light. There's work for me to do. And that work begins with finding Peter."

"He was the best friend I had in the world," said Captain Andrews huskily. "I'm afraid of foul play or some fatal accident in this wilderness."

EVE began to eat the supper her mother was forcing on her attention.

"Why do you fear foul play, captain?"

"That is the only answer I can find for his disappearance. Unless he has lost himself on these confounded plains. And he has had, it seems to me, too much experience in Australia to make that a plausible reason. Of course, he had enemies as a man in his position would. I am taking it for granted that you know a not inconsiderable amount about my cousin." This last with a glance half quizzical, half frankly curious.

"I really know few facts about him." Eve interjected this hurriedly, fearful lest the captain take too much knowledge for granted on her part. "We were together a great deal while he was trying to buy horses here, and during the trial he was with me nearly every day. I know how he feels about war; I think I understand his philosophy of life fairly well. But as to his personal history I really am practically a stranger. Perhaps it's just as well after I disappointed him so."

Andrews looked at Eve intently; then he said bluntly: "I beg your pardon, Miss Devonsher, but the stage-driver gave me to understand that you and my cousin, the Earl, are engaged to be married. Will you tell me if that is true?"

"We are not engaged," replied Eve, slowly. "We thought we cared about each other but it turned out to be a mistake on both our parts." Her face burned painfully as she spoke, but she tried to turn off her embarrassment with a little smile. "All of which is undoubtedly a great relief to you!"

The young man returned the smile. "The stage-driver didn't leave me with the impression that I ought to feel so. And I find myself extraordinarily open-minded on the subject since meeting you." Then he sobered quickly. "Peter is no philanderer. He likes women and they have liked him, but as far as I know he's never asked a woman to marry him. Miss Devonsher—" He hesitated, looked from Eve, leaning against the dark cushion of the old armchair, her great eyes fastened with wistful anxiety on his, to her mother fussing over the half-eaten meal and obviously absorbed in watching Eve's reaction to his visit. "Miss Devonsher, he must have come back to see you. For heaven's sake, tell me what lay between you."

Lee Fu shuffled in for the tray and shuffled out again. Eve, her thin, uncertain hands clasped in her lap, stared at the little table on which lay the iron document case. And suddenly one of the dreadful nightmares of her illness flashed into her memory. Peter, a brown speck on the endless green plains limping to her rescue. She clasped her hands more firmly. It did not seem to her that she could force herself to review for this stranger the details of her friendship with the man who had twined himself round the very fibers of her being.

Mary Devonsher, perched on the edge of the bed, allowed the silence to endure for several minutes before she exclaimed: "Eve, tell him! You've got to make a start, one of you. And the captain with his mystery about the major's work, and you with the mystery about his friendship for you, will mark time until it's too late to do anything for him. Tell how kind he was to us. Go on, Eve! Captain Andrews is a gentleman."

Eve turned to Andrews apologetically. "I've been through a long ordeal. I find it hard to talk about it. You said, I think, that Lame Jack, the stage-driver, gave you details of the trial?"

"Yes, I think I know all that he knows about the Devonsher family and Sir John Colbaith! An immensely interesting story."

"I'm glad you found it so." Eve's tone was dry. Then she went on with difficulty. "I always have been slow to acknowledge any one's moral superiority to myself. Not that I had any great idea of my own high-mindedness, but I avoided self-introspection all I could and just in proportion as my pride was crucified by the various happenings of my girlhood, I developed a sort of independence of conscience that wouldn't take dictation even from my mother.

"PETER was the first person I ever met with a world view of life, an impersonal philosophy. He was the only person I knew who'd contributed his whole share to the Great War. I began to look up to him without realizing it. He was with the sheriff and Judge Jones when they went up into the Forest Reserve to arrest me. I hadn't the slightest intention of coming back with them. If I couldn't get away I planned to shoot myself. It was Peter who persuaded me to come back and take punishment. And when I permitted myself to be led by him to such a decision, I acknowledged to myself that I—I adored him!"

Eve's voice broke. She battled with herself for a moment, then went on.

"All through the trial, he was with me as much as was possible. He used frequently to carry my meals from the tavern to my cell. He was simple and fine. And when things were the blackest he told me that he wanted to marry me. He was everything that was generous—high-minded.

"You see—" Eve moistened her lips and rubbed her hand wearily over her forehead. "You see, I had pleaded not guilty, and Peter believed me. There were, as you probably know, all sorts of disgusting matters regarding my family brought out by the various witnesses. My lawyer wanted me to ignore these when I told my story on the witness stand. But Peter begged of me to tell the truth. He urged me with so much earnestness that suddenly I realized that there must be nothing but truth between this man and me, that his love for me was based on there being perfect trust between us. But I was incapable of normal thinking, I suppose. After Peter's plea to me to state truth, I decided to jeopardize all I had in life in one cast of the dice and I went to the stand and told everything."

She drew a sobbing breath and for a moment could not go on. Captain Andrews leaned forward in his chair, waiting eagerly. As if in answer to a question from him Eve said when she had recovered herself:

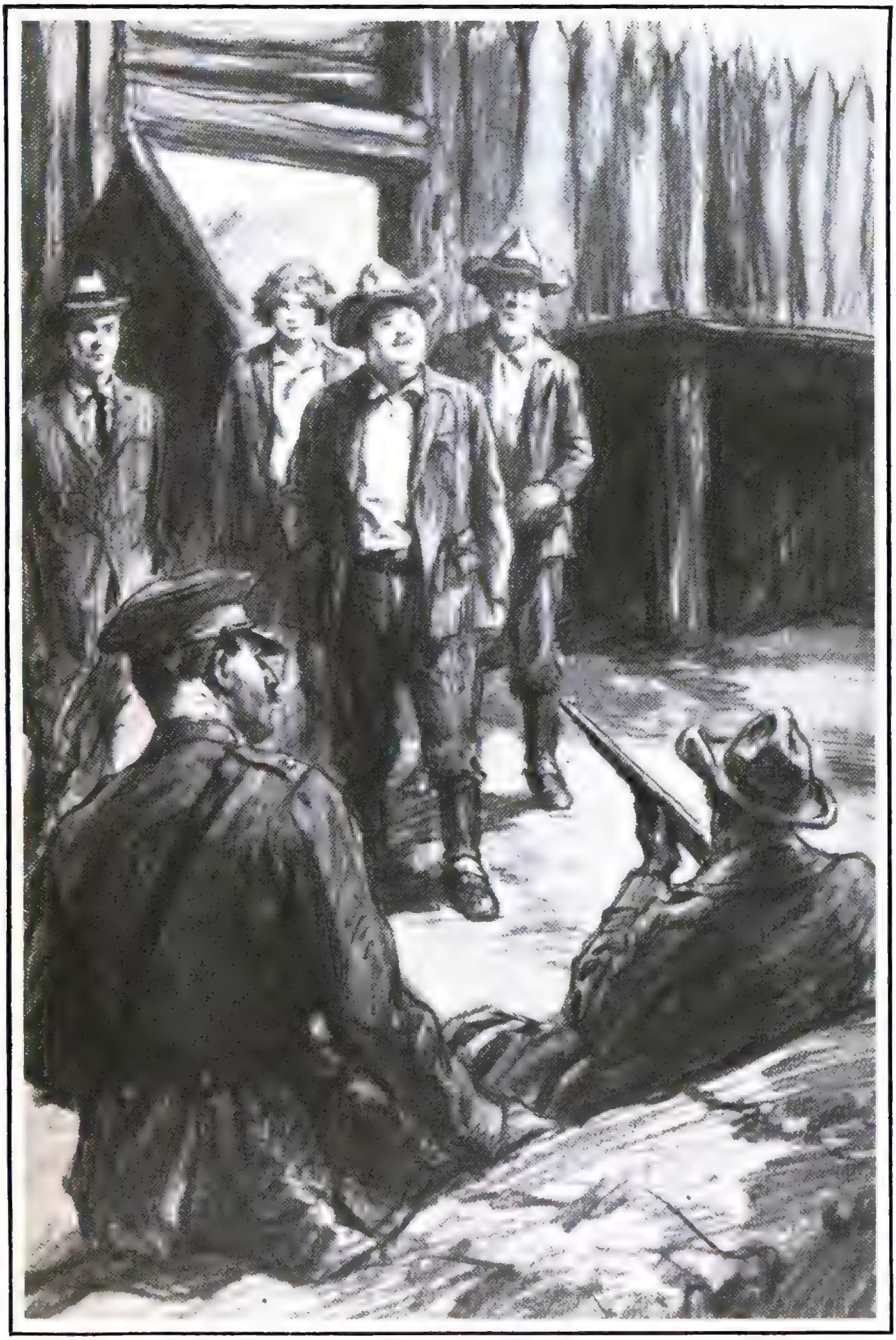
"It turned Peter against me!"

"Oh, no!" exclaimed Andrews.

"Yes!" insisted Eve. "He put up a gallant front, or tried to. He was heartbrokenly kind, but—I was not the woman he had idealized me to be. He said so at last. He wanted me to marry him the night he left. He would, you know. But of course that could not be. He went away and I was taken very ill. That's all."

"All?" echoed Captain Andrews. "No, it can't be all. Or else Peter is not the chap I've known all my life. He went half mad after he left you, what with his love for you and all that you and he had suffered of disillusion about each other. He cast his country and his career into the discard and came back to you. You've given me the reason for his turning back, Miss Devonsher. Now then, what could have happened to him between Cheyenne and here?"

"You may not have the reason for his turning back at all," said Eve. "Let me tell you another angle of the matter." She outlined to him rapidly Peter's reputed contacts with Angus Duncan and Henry Worth.



Henry slowly lifted the gun. Without taking his gaze from the quarter-breed, Peter drawled: "I knew you'd come at last!"

Over this Andrews shook his head in a puzzled way. "It has a curious aspect," he admitted reluctantly, "but I'd stake my life on Peter's being incapable of doing anything dishonorable."

"Would you?" Eve's voice was wistful.

"So would I!" said Mary Devonsher suddenly. "So would Eve, ordinarily. But you see, she'd kept her soul alive, really, with the thought of the major's admiration for her."

"He still has it. I know old Peter," declared the captain. "Never mind what he said."

"But you must not cast aside the evidence about Angus," protested Eve. "Granted that Peter can explain it satisfactorily, still it may tie into his mission here and so have an important relation to his turning back." She put her hand wearily to her head.

"You are very tired!" exclaimed Andrews, rising. "Yet"—with his delightful smile—"I won't apologize for intruding on you."

Eve, who was indeed trembling with fatigue, returned the smile. "Let me rest for an hour; then we must plan our next move."

"We'd better call in Judge Jones," said Mary.

"No!" cried Eve. "Not until the captain and I have sounded out every possibility. I'm afraid of the law in this."

"Well, I'm glad to hear you say it." Mary closed the door after their visitor. "Come, dear, let me help you over to the bed."

"I don't need help," replied Eve. "I'm feeling stronger, even if I am frightfully tired. There's something concrete at hand to do, thank God."

"You mustn't overdo," protested Mary, "but I declare you do seem stronger. You should have eaten more supper," she suggested, congratulating herself on her acumen.

"So I should have!" agreed Eve, as if the thought had only just occurred to her that food was essential. "If you'll bring me a real meal at ten o'clock, I'll promise to eat it before I see Captain Andrews." She stretched her long body gratefully on the bed and closed her eyes. Then she opened them to say, "He has a curious, remote look of Peter."

Her mother bent and kissed her, turned the light low and left her.

Almost at once Eve slid into a dreamless slumber.

Promptly at ten o'clock Mary entered the room with a steaming tray. It contained a hot roast-beef sandwich and a cup of cocoa. Eve sat up and ate without protest. Her mother helped her to brush her hair and when the captain came in he found Eve sitting under the lamp with a new glow in eyes and cheeks. He sat down opposite her and began abruptly.

"Peter left Cheyenne in his crazy little Ford car at five o'clock in the morning of September 5th. He had left the car in a garage with instructions for the attendant to sell it. Peter was delighted, the attendant told me, to find that the car had not been sold. He took an extra supply of petrol and announced that he was off for supper in Antelope Basin. The garage person said the Earl, or rather the major, as he called him, was quiet and as cool as usual but he seemed to the man to have aged very much in the two weeks of his absence."

EVE listened intently. Captain Andrews rose from his chair and took a turn or two up and down the room, his hand pressed against his left shoulder as if the stump of his arm pained him. As he walked he stared at Eve. Finally he burst forth.

"It is an immense relief to find that you speak our language. When Lame Jack began to tell of you today and I realized that old Peter had at last succumbed to a woman I went into a complete state of funk. Even when Jack described you as a person of education and power I couldn't believe, because of the—er—circumstances, that you were anything but the heroine of a Wild West cinema. I thought Peter must have gone mad. But I understand him now. Trust old Peter!"

The captain chuckled, clutched at his shoulder anew and then went on, his face a little twisted with either mental or physical distress—perhaps with both.

"It's unbelievable!" he cried. "I wonder if you understand. He is the most distinguished man in England in the matter of Colonial relations. Peter has done more to tie the Colonial governments to us during these terrible years than any other human being or, for that matter, any group of them. His knowledge of Colonial affairs, his deep sympathy with their aspirations, his terrific capacity for hard work make him invaluable, particularly now with morale at what we hope to God is its lowest ebb. It was bad enough when he insisted on joining his regiment at the front. That was anxiety enough. We all were actually relieved when he was returned to us merely lamed for life. But to have this thing happen! It's unbelievable!"

Eve leaned forward and something in her gaze brought the man to pause before her.

"What is unbelievable, captain?"

"That he should have voluntarily done what he has done. He came to America on a mission of extraordinary delicacy. That he was given the mission was a mark of the ultimate confidence of the government. He has failed his country in a way and at a time that never can be forgiven him. If he is lying dead as the result of an automobile accident here on these plains it is better, after what he has failed to do, that it should be so."

"Yet you said earlier in the evening that you would stake your life on Peter's being incapable of doing anything dishonorable!" Eve's nostrils distended, her eyes glowed.

"I know I did!" admitted Captain Andrews. "Oh, I am miserable! Miserable!"

"I know!" exclaimed Eve. "One loves and admires him so! It's like one's dearest hero toppling! Captain Andrews, I have no gift for unraveling mysteries. We can send out posses of men and have the plain searched between here and Cheyenne: that is, an attempted search. You have seen the country. You know how difficult it would be really to comb it properly. But aside from that sort of search we've got to trust to intuition."

"And what does your intuition say?" asked the captain, eagerly.

"That Minnie Duncan and her mother know something of the captain's movements. They are the sheriff's daughter and wife."

"Oh, yes! Lame Jack described them at length to me."

Eve nodded. "They called on me this afternoon, big with some sort of news with which they wished to drive some sort of a bargain. Minnie was able to make a small beginning but I'd have none of it. You may imagine that I'm fed up on that crew. My suggestion is that in the morning I ask them to open the matter up with me again. Does Lame Jack know who you are?"

"No. I'm merely an audience to him."

"Of course your accent told him you were English, but if he doesn't realize that Peter has disappeared, Minnie and her mother will not have taken alarm." Eve went on at considerable length to describe the visit she had received that afternoon from the two ladies.

WHEN she had finished Andrews stared at her in entire bewilderment. "You think, do you, that the two women abducted the Earl or killed him?"

Eve laughed. "Well, I can't blame you! You must think we are a bloodthirsty community. No, I don't think either of them has that amount of courage. I think merely that somehow, through Henry Worth, perhaps, they have knowledge of Peter's movements."

"Let's have at them tonight, then!" cried Andrews.

Eve hesitated, then shook her head. "I'm the only one that can get the information from them, if they have any. And, captain, I'm so tired now that my brain doesn't function well. Give me the rest of the night for sleep and I shall be able to handle them. It's a dark, stormy night. Even did we start searchers out, they could accomplish nothing. I know that it seems like a terrible thing for me to plead delay, but—" She hesitated, then went on slowly, "I have the patience begot by a terrible fear and a great affection."

"You are none too strong yourself, captain!" exclaimed Mary. "You go along to bed. Lee Fu is waiting to give you a hot-water bottle and a glass of hot milk."

Captain Andrews, very white and drawn about the lips, looked from one woman to the other. Then with a sigh he said: "Perhaps you are right. Thank you. Good night." And he went out slowly.

"His face has that same awful tired look the major's has." Mary began to make the room ready for the night. "I suppose it's one of the things war did to them."

"I'm afraid so," agreed Eve. "Peter! I wonder where he is!"

And yet she slept as soon as she touched her pillow and did not waken until her mother brought in her breakfast at eight o'clock the next morning.

Eve felt clear-headed and dressed herself, conscious of a miraculous access of strength. When she commented on this her mother expressed no surprise.

"Doc Peabody said the worst of your sickness was mental. Eve, since your fever left you he's been telling me to find some way to rouse you. Well, I wouldn't have chosen this way. But it works!"

"I don't believe he's dead," said Eve abruptly.

"Nor do I," replied Mary. "Keep that thought uppermost, Eve, and your strength will come back to you. When you're ready—the captain has been waiting for an hour."

"I've nothing to see the captain for. Just tell him good morning for me and tell Sid I want to see him. Leave the window open. I know the air is sharp but I want to get used to it. I'll be going out in it within a day or so. I'll finish dressing, myself."

Mary's worn face expressed a great relief as she hurried out of the room. Eve ignored the gown her mother had laid out for her. She made her way slowly to the closet, took down her old green corduroy riding-suit and put it on. When Sid came in she was sitting by the window, breathing deep of the sharp mountain air.

Sid's jaw dropped. "Eve!" he gasped.

"I'm feeling better, Sid. There's work to do. This is for your ear alone. Listen closely." Eve told him the story first of Captain Andrew's errand, then of the call she had received the day before from his wife and daughter.

The sheriff was so excited that he stuttered. "I'll get a—a—a posse organized in an hour!" he exclaimed.

"Don't do anything until I've had a session with your wife and Minnie."

"All right. Listen, Eve, take Minnie by herself. You can do more with her. Since the baby's been coming, or Angus's death, or something, seems like she's not so bad when Jane's not with her. I'll send her over to you. Do you care if I have a talk with the captain?"

"It's a good idea for you to talk with him. Make him feel that you will turn over all your resources to him."

"Sure I will!" Sid heaved himself toward the door.

MINNIE appeared while Eve still was wondering just how to phrase her inquiry. The young widow was looking drawn and tired.

"Sit down, Minnie," said Eve. "You look worn out."

"That's more than you do!"—staring at Eve in astonishment. "I never saw such a change in my life. What's happened?"

"I'm still weak and shaky. But I am better. Minnie, I haven't said anything to your father yet about the ranch. It seems to me I ought to think several times before giving up something that would take care of mother and me for the rest of our lives."

"Are you reneging?" demanded Minnie, indignantly.

Eve shrugged her shoulders.

Minnie's pale face began to flush and her voice rose. "After I gave up my information, too—kept my promise—and you so high and mighty and above bargaining!"

"Information! Pooh! Don't be so childish, Minnie. You used to have a good head before you got in the habit of letting your mother do all your thinking for you."

"Don't you call that valuable? Don't you know what it meant?" shrilled Minnie. "Well, I could tell you but I won't."

"That's quite all right," said Eve complacently. "I'm not asking you for any of your silly keyhole information. I'm just telling you that I think I ought to keep the ranch."

"Look here!" cried Minnie. "If I told you a way you could prove John Worth was Sir John Colbaith's son and not your grandfather's, would you think that information big enough?"

"I don't care whose son he was"—serenely from Eve. "I've reached the depths where I could be cousin to the devil perfectly contentedly."

"Well, there's others that don't feel that way"—with a toss of her head. "When I told Major Colbaith that, he looked like he wished he could cut my throat."

"Pure imagination!" declared Eve. "He has too much sense to believe such silliness or to care if he did believe."

"He believed me, fast enough, and I showed him the old map of Fort Jason and the old deeds and things about the Antelope Basin Grant. He knew I was talking facts. And he paid me for 'em, too."

"How?" asked Eve sharply.

"Don't you wish you knew?" retorted Minnie.

Eve's voice was deliberate. "Not enough to swap the ranch for it."

"You know you'd give your eyeteeth to know anything about him. You know you're breaking your heart for him right now. Feeling like you do about him, I should think you'd have more feeling for me and the way Angus's death has left me."

"I know you loved Angus, Minnie!" Eve's voice was gentle. "I hope his baby will comfort you."

"I wanted to bring the baby up on Angus's ranch." Minnie began to sob. "I should think you'd understand."

"I guess I do understand, Minnie. You may keep the ranch."

Minnie kept on sobbing. "You are a good sport, Eve. I always knew it. He didn't give me any kind of pay for those papers. I took them out of the document box after my father took it and thought he had it hid. I didn't rightly understand them. I just took those that seemed to have something about Sir John Colbaith in 'em and that had big old seals, so he'd see I hadn't faked them."

"Can you remember what was in the papers, Minnie? Take a drink of water and try to stop sobbing."

"I can't remember very much." Minnie poured a glass of water obediently.

"Did any one but you see them?"

"No. I didn't trust mother not to run to Judge Jones with them, so as to curry favor with him."

"Why did you give the major the map of Fort Jason?"

"It has an enormous red seal at the top."

"Wasn't there anything else on the map? Try to remember, Minnie."

Minnie clasped both hands to her head in her effort to concentrate. "There was a map of all this country down here, made by hand on the lower part of the paper. Sort of sketched in, you know. That's every bit I can recall, Eve. And I couldn't tell you what else there was in the other papers if you gave me a dollar a word for it."

"All right, Minnie!" Eve sighed in disappointment. "I wish you'd go out and look up Judge Jones for me and tell him I'd like to see him at once."

"I suppose I've no right to try to work this out without his clever brain," she added to herself as Minnie left her with alacrity.

But Minnie did not have to seek the judge. He burst into Eve's room as the sheriff's daughter left it.

"Eve!" he said in a low voice. "I've just had exciting news from the warden at Rawlins. Henry Worth escaped five days ago! Major Colbaith had had a three-hour conference with Henry the day before. The major had come incognito, as it were. He had arranged for another talk the following day, but in the meantime Henry made his get-away. The major left Cheyenne the day after Henry's escape. For some reason connected with the major's visit they were keeping the escape absolutely from the knowledge of the public. They have let me know only because they are desperate. They are convinced that Henry had been a little off his head ever since he'd been at Rawlins. He told the warden that he'd been factor at Fort Jason. The warden never had heard of a factor and barely of Fort Jason. He laughed at Henry and Henry looked sheepish and mumbled something about an overdose of sleeplessness."

Eve rose slowly from her chair, eyes brilliant. "What did you advise the warden to do, judge?" she asked breathlessly.

"To continue to keep his mouth shut, while I did some quiet looking around down here. Eve, let me see the contents of the iron box, will you?"

Eve nodded. "Yes, judge! But—don't laugh, please—I'm going up to Fort Jason."

"You! It would kill you! I'm leaving for there myself—for no reason I could explain any more than you could, probably."

Eve stood thinking rapidly. One part of her mind warned her to protect Peter from the judge, the other part urged her to solve Peter's trouble by using the old lawyer's keen mind.

"The reason I'm going," said Eve, "is this." And she told him of her interview with Minnie and of Captain Andrews' story.

The old man was tremendously excited. "I don't think there's any sense in the world in going up there!" he declared. "The old place is such a ruin it wouldn't shelter a rat. What possible idea could a man like Major Colbaith have in wasting time in such a spot? Of course, Henry might be hiding there—but the major—" Judge Jones paused, suddenly aware of Eve's riding costume. "You don't mean to tell me you were thinking seriously of going to Fort Jason? Why—" He screwed his lone eye into her face. "You are looking marvelously better! What's happened? Have you had word from Colbaith?"

Eve smiled and shook her head. "I know no more about him than you do, Willy Jones. I am better. I'm leaving for Fort Jason this afternoon."

"Eve, you couldn't stick on a horse for five miles, let alone a hundred."

"I'm not going to try. Sid shall drive me in the covered democrat wagon. You and Captain Andrews, Sid and I are going. You've been advising a camping trip. I'm taking your advice."

"Like thunder you are!" growled the judge, still watching Eve intently. "One day you are weeping from sheer weakness and the next day you are your old self. Skinny, I'll admit, and wabbly about the knees—but yourself. Doc Peabody was right. Well—we'll send him over and if he agrees, I will."

"Neither of you has a word to say in the matter," retorted Eve. "You'd better sit down and begin to go over those papers while I interview Mother and Lee Fu." She walked slowly to the door, struggling to hide the extraordinary weight of her legs by an extreme dignity of manner which did not in the least deceive the judge. He shook his head, grinned and sat down to his task.

Eve's mother protested violently and sent for Doc Peabody. The little doctor, however, after giving Eve a careful going over astonished even Eve by saying that if she avoided over-fatigue and catching cold the trip would do her good.

"Have the canvas cot and plenty of blankets put into the democrat wagon," he directed Eve. "If you begin to run a temperature, come home." Then he looked at her with a complacent smile. "Well, that's that! Thank God you're on your feet again. Mentally, I mean. I've got two new flu cases this morning." And he was off, his coat flying back over the inevitable black bag.

THE trail to Cheyenne ran northeast from Antelope Basin. The old trail to Fort Jason followed this route until it passed Old Battle Mountain. There, barely perceptible in the sagebrush, it turned to the left and led northwest, toward Wind River country. At one o'clock in the afternoon Eve and her little party of four reached the fork in the trail and turned toward Fort Jason. It was a small caravan, consisting of two covered democrat wagons, each drawn by two of Sid's best teams. Eve, a heavy coat over her riding-suit, sat among a great pile of cushions beside the captain, who drove one team, while Sid and Judge Jones occupied the lead wagon.

It was a beautiful September day, unusually warm for the time of year, for Antelope Basin is in a country of early winters. The trail wound across a great yellow plain, dotted with purple and silver sagebrush. East and west were vague blue ranges into which the plains melted imperceptibly. Far to the northwest on the horizon line lay a gigantic mesa, wrapped in gossamer filaments of scarlet and gold. It seemed, at first view, hardly more substantial than the clouds that sought to hide its nakedness, yet persistently as the miles lengthened behind them to Old Battle, did the mesa dominate the visible world.

Andrews eyed it for a time in silence, then he exclaimed: "Extraordinary! What is its name?"

"Great Altar Butte," replied Eve. "Fort Jason lies at its foot."

"How far is it from here?"

"About ninety miles. We'll see nothing else during the entire trip. The Indians used to send their young men up there to worship the week before their official coming of age."

The English soldier watched the clouds sailing across the purple mass for some time before he said, slowly, "It's a rebuke to atheism." Then as if ashamed of having been caught in a sentimentalism he added, hastily: "If old Peter has turned hermit and decided to live under that, I don't blame him! Are the clouds always flirting with it so?"

"To a greater or less degree. There are so many today that my guess is we are going to have a storm within the next twenty-four hours. A thunderstorm, probably, with plenty of wind."

"I hope old Peter is not—" Andrews stopped abruptly. "Isn't it strange that I believe him to be alive, when every logical argument points to his lying dead somewhere on these God-forsaken plains?"

"Peter, sick or well, injured or whole, is at Fort Jason," said Eve, firmly, but astounded at the strength of her own conviction.

"I hope so," replied Peter's cousin, shaking his head. Then silence fell between them.

There were a thousand questions Eve would have liked to ask the captain about Peter, but she could not ask them. She was, in the first place, too greatly consumed with anxiety regarding the major's safety, and, in the second place, she wanted Peter himself to answer the queries. After a short silence, however, the captain began to talk eagerly, as if he desired to get away from his own thoughts. He wanted to know about the hunting in the Antelope country, about the horses, about the old Indian wars. Eve did her best for a time to entertain him but by mid-afternoon she was glad to crawl back onto the cot, roll in her blankets and close her eyes.

When she awoke it was early twilight. Her wagon end was drawn up to face a fire over which Sid's fat face shone like a harvest moon. Eve took a deep breath of the air which held a promise of rain yet held too the indescribable tang of fall in the mountains and was life-giving. Then she crawled out of the wagon and stood, tall and swaying a little, beside the fire. She was greeted by a shout from the men, who insisted that she was to have had her supper in bed. But Eve laughed at them and, crouching on a blanket by the fire, ate as she had not eaten for months.

During the meal Judge Jones expounded the theory he had evolved during the afternoon as to why he was going to Fort Jason.

"That Indian devil has decoyed Major Colbaith up there and is holding him for ransom or some such. Henry is probably plumb loco and considers that he's doing his duty as factor. Curious about us mountain folks," he added; "we are all a little crazy. I suppose the constant effort to oppose our little ego to the bigness of the landscape accents our peculiarities, particularly our egotism. Take the Devonshers—"

"Judge!" shouted Sid, suddenly. "If you say a word tonight about that everlasting Devonsher family, I'll—I'll—"

"Quit cooking for the crowd." suggested Eve. "I'm with you, Sid."

"I didn't mean to insult you any, Eve," explained the sheriff, "but the trial is over."

"The trial isn't over," contradicted the judge. "It won't be over until—" He hesitated.

"Until when?" demanded Sid.

"Until Eve says it is," finished Judge Jones.

EVE made no comment on this. She looked at the three faces in the firelight: Captain Andrews's, its youth blurred by the lines of fatigue and disillusion; the old judge's, lean, vulturelike, but with unexpected fineness about the lips; Sid's with red chops and faithful eyes like those of an Irish setter. All three were turned toward her with expressions of kindliness and deepest interest. She finally smiled a little sadly and said, "I'm a puppet pulled about by Fate."

"You're nothing of the sort!" snapped the judge. "You are hounded by your ancestral traits but you can best them if you'll turn and fight."

"There you go again!" groaned Sid.

Every one laughed and Eve said: "Sing to us, Sid. Anything but 'The Oregon Trail.'"

The sheriff immediately opened his lips and began, "'I am a simple cowman.'" And under cover of this outrageous ditty Eve went back to her wagon and to bed.

A dawn start the next morning. The indescribable pungency of the dew-wet sagebrush, the flit of bluebirds' wings across the trail, and the sudden birth of Great Altar as the sun shot up behind them. All day they moved toward the gigantic mesa. Imperceptibly its clouded mass assumed architectural form. Huge black terraces striated in parallel lines of greenish white were revealed at its base while the top still was obscured by morning mists. By noon the great vista of the mesa top lifted from the clouds—a floor of beaten gold stretching upward till it merged into a milk-white temple with fantastic columns flung pillarlike from base to cloud-kissing top. It was as if the gods had labored and had brought forth a place of worship fitted in dimensions for them to worship within it the greater gods.

By mid-afternoon, a clump of cottonwood trees lifted themselves sedately against the lines of the lower terrace. For many miles, Captain Andrews insisted that these were only a larger growth of sagebrush.

But when, beside the cottonwood clump, appeared the irregular outlines of a group of buildings, he heaved a great sigh of relief and urged the horses on into the dust of the preceding team.

Eve's prediction as to a storm gave promise of fulfilment now, for isolated black clouds began to drive along the gold of the mesa top where they hurled themselves against the great altar walls and burst with a flash of white forked fire and a reverberation as of distant drum fire. On the trail, however, the sun shone with undiminished vigor and magpies chattered in black and white flight above the horses' heads.

Slowly Fort Jason emerged from the silent plains, itself as silent as death, a long gray line of broken stockade fencing. Above this was a low building of time-blackened logs, a building still of imposing dimensions, although one end of it was in ruins. The two wagons approached slowly, for the fort had been placed in a commanding position well up on the slope that led to the first terrace of the mesa. Neither Eve nor the captain observed that they were swallowing huge quantities of dust. They followed the lead team so closely that until it swung to the left and halted they did not observe what was causing the halt. It was a little Ford car stranded in a growth of cottonwood. A dead saddle horse lay beside it.

The little group of four gathered about the automobile. It was quite empty.

"Eve," ordered the judge, "you stay out here while we three do a little reconnoitering."

"No," returned Eve, quietly. "I intend to know the worst as it comes."

NO ONE made an attempt to argue with her. Sid walked slowly up the trail which time could not obliterate. It led to the huge broken door in the stockade. Captain Andrews followed the sheriff while Eve and the judge brought up the rear. Within the stockade they paused. In the middle of the open space which lay before the main building there was a well, a huge basin shape of roughly mortared stone. On the edge of this basin sat Peter. About six feet from him, a rifle across his knees, an old army overcoat over his prison stripes, Henry Worth sat tailor-fashion on the ground. Both men were grizzled and haggard almost beyond belief. Henry slowly lifted the gun and covered Sid. Peter did not turn his gaze from the quarter-breed, but he drawled huskily:

"Here you are, at last!"

"Put that gun down, Henry!" ordered the sheriff.

Henry grinned maliciously but said nothing, nor did he drop the gun. Judge Jones deliberately walked toward Henry, who quickly shifted his aim to cover the lawyer. Immediately Sid shot through his pocket, knocking the rifle out of Henry's hands. Henry gave a howl and sprang at Peter, but he was met by Peter, Captain Andrews and Sid. They grappled with him, Andrews, in spite of his crippled condition, giving a good account of himself.

"Bring up a rope, judge!" panted Sid, as he hung to Henry's twisting body.

The judge obeyed with surprising agility. Shortly Henry, firmly trussed, was leaning against the well curb, muttering to himself but entirely helpless. His hands were powder-scarred from Sid's shot but otherwise uninjured. Peter, who had not taken part in the tying up of the quarter-breed, was very insistent that Sid search him for papers and heaved an audible sigh of relief when the sheriff transferred a manila envelope from Henry's breast pocket to his own. Peter then became his casual self.

"You were ghastly slow in getting here, sheriff. Ah, Charley, how are you?"—as his cousin, suddenly recalled to the amenities of life, offered Peter his hand. "What brought you over?"

"You!" replied the captain.

Peter stared at him, then slowly turned to Eve, who was sitting on the well curb studying Peter's haggard face.

"You have been ill, Eve?"

"Yes," replied Eve. "Peter, are you hungry?"

"Rather! Nothing in five days but the lunch I brought to see me through in a single day from Cheyenne to Antelope Basin."

Here he was interrupted by Henry, who began to curse in a low-voiced but none the less thorough manner.

"Better gag him!" drawled Peter. "The blighter is quite mad."

Sid carried out the suggestion while Eve went on to say: "There's a great deal of talking to be done and that thunderstorm is going to arrive shortly. Are any of the rooms in the building there habitable, Peter?"

"I can't say," replied Peter. "Henry and I have had our entire session here on the well curb. Plenty of water but little else save a curiously unsatisfactory conversation."

"I'll take a look around," said the judge.

"I'll go with you." Eve rose and followed the judge.

The main doors of the building sagged open and Eve and the judge passed within. The entrance gave directly into the living-room of the fort. In spite of the fact that ruin lay all about it, the room itself was intact. It was a spacious apartment perhaps fifty feet square with its roof resting on spruce beams three feet in diameter. A fireplace of uncut stone dominated the south end of the room. Part of the chimney cluttered the hearth, but the judge was of the opinion that a fire still could do famously there. Full of enthusiasm over the unexpected shelter, he hurried out to help in moving in the camp outfit, while Eve looked about her with a sensation almost of homesickness. She never before had visited the fort. She never had wanted to visit it. It smacked too heavily of family misfortune. But now, looking at the noble proportions of the room her grandfather had built, she could have wept with the desire for days whose rich promise never could come again.

The men came in shortly, bearing the contents of the two wagons. When these were deposited, the captain and the sheriff dragged Henry in and laid him on some blankets in a corner. Peter already was chewing appreciatively on a huge slice of bread and butter.

"I'll have you something hot," promised Sid, "if some one will lend a hand at clearing the hearth."

"I'll do that," volunteered Captain Andrews, "if the judge will ungag that poor beggar yonder and feed him some bread."

The judge grunted and undertook the job. Peter helped Eve to set up the canvas cot and shortly he was seated beside her, silently watching the preparations for a meal. It was a silence that Eve for the moment had curiously little desire to break. She was clinging to the last moment of her illusions with all the lack of logic commonly attributed to her sex. The thunder crashes grew nearer and more frequent. Henry in his corner munched and cursed and was sternly reprimanded by the judge. And a fire suddenly crackled and burst into flame on the hearth.

AFTER Peter had eaten a hot meal he insisted on being allowed to shave himself, which he proceeded to do serenely and deftly with his shaving mirror hung below the wagon lantern on the log wall beside the fireplace. His toilet finished, he returned to his seat beside Eve.

"Now then," he said, "I'm ready to hear your story, Cousin Charley."

"My story! Well, you are a cool bird! My story!" The captain, who had been lighting a cigarette, stood holding the match till it burned his fingers.

"Really!" Peter's eyebrows were raised. "Why the excitement? I'm grateful to you for appearing here at this particular place, but perhaps you wouldn't mind explaining why you came to the States at all."

"I came because your chief felt that nothing short of death could have kept you from fulfilling your engagement with his—his—er—office. And he sent me over here to locate your body if I could."

"Ah, yes! I see!" Peter turned abruptly to Eve. "And you, Eve. Why did you come?"

"To find you and ask you what was your real mission to Antelope Basin. Peter, I must know!" She spoke with an earnestness that for a moment silenced Henry's mutterings in the corner.

Peter's eyes were full of a weariness that was only partly physical. He looked away from Eve. "Judge Jones, what brought you, if I may ask?"

"I came to finish the trial," returned the judge, promptly.

Sid did not wait to be questioned. "I came mostly to find Henry Worth. Say, when I turn him in at Rawlins my stock in this state is going to rise fifty per cent above what it was before the trial lowered it. Of course"—hastily—"I want to get this Angus and the iron box matter cleared up too."

Another silence followed, broken by the crash of thunder and the slash of heavy rain across the roof.

"And if I refuse to talk?" said Peter at last softly, as if to himself.

"You won't." Eve turned from her contemplation of the fire to give him a full look. "You won't. Do you remember what you said to me that afternoon beside the cedar ring? When I said I wouldn't go back to take punishment you said: 'Yes, you will. The big ones always do!' "

"And do you think I deserve punishment, Eve?"

"I don't know as to that. I think you owe me a very full explanation, and your cousin as well."

"But I owe Judge Jones none!" Peter's voice was dry.

"The judge continues his job as umpire between Antelope Basin and the Devonshers." Eve's voice was quite as dry.

Peter rested his elbows on his knees and stared long at the fire. The judge gagged Henry and seated himself on a wagon seat at the side of the hearth. Captain Andrews dropped down beside him. Sid occupied a similar seat opposite. Thus, with the cot placed before the hearth, a hollow square was formed about the blaze.

It seemed to Eve as if the silence had continued for hours when Peter began to speak in his usual casual drawl.

"I was called very unexpectedly to Rawlins. When I reached there I had a talk with the warden. He insisted that I identify myself before he'd give me the freedom of the prison, as it were. He rather thought from things Henry had said I might be an accomplice of Henry's. Henry was even then a bit balmy, I thought, and so the warden thought. Not but what his conversation on the whole was fairly coherent, but he insisted that he was factor of Fort Jason and that as such he was obliged to have me arrested. It was only after I agreed that I would permit him to arrest me that he would talk.

"We had a couple of hours together and I went away agreeing to come back the next morning and allow him to have me put into a cell. But late that night I was sent for at the prison and I found the warden in a terrible lather. Henry had crawled into a box of shirts being shipped out of the prison shirt factory that evening and had made a safe escape. His absence had not been discovered until he had been gone several hours.

"Both the warden and I thought he would have gone back to Antelope Basin. I agreed to hop up to Cheyenne, get my car and come down to Antelope—all very quietly. The warden said he'd lose his job if it got noised about that he had lost Henry. I started the next morning for Antelope but I hadn't gone twenty miles before I became convinced that Henry had gone to his factorship at Fort Jason. So I made my way over here, cross-country. It was rough going, but I had no trouble save bursted tires.

"WHEN I drew up before the fort, Henry opened fire on me. His horse was tethered under the cottonwood trees and in the fusillade he killed the poor brute and peppered my reserve cans of petrol. So we were jolly well stranded there, both of us. Having accomplished all this in a single moment of time, he came out, covered me with his gun and marched me in to the well curb, where he kept me prisoner until you arrived. I don't think he has slept at all. I've dropped off again and again but when I'd waken he'd be staring at me. Charley, have you tobacco with you?"

The captain tossed a heavy pouch to Peter and the audience of four waited impatiently while Peter carefully cleaned and filled an ancient brier.

"Peter!" groaned the captain. "Why in the name of heaven have you, of all people in the world, neglected your duty to mix in a wretched blackmailing row with people with whom you could be only remotely concerned? Explain it, Peter! There must be an explanation."

Peter warmed his palms round his pipe bowl while he said slowly: "I hadn't realized how this thing would appear at home because I supposed I'd cabled a proper message. I still believe that I did. It would not be a difficult matter to trace. However, I will go more into detail with you; but I'd like to move Henry out of earshot before I begin."

"He might just as well be sleeping in one of the wagons!" The sheriff rose ponderously. "If you'll lend me a hand, judge, I won't waste time trying to persuade him to walk."

No one spoke while Henry was being bundled into new quarters. When Sid and the judge were in their places again, Peter began to talk without further urging.

"I was as you say, Charley, sent over here on an important matter. Its very importance caused it to move ponderously and I cooled my heels in Washington until I was almost mad. I was ill, too. This wound in my leg put me to bed for days at a time. One day when I was fuming about Washington, utterly fed up on watchful waiting, an old friend of mine turned up. He was westward-bound to buy horses and he invited me to go along. My special work would not be ready to my hand for at least a month. I always had wanted to see the country where my grandfather had held sway and so I accepted the invitation. My friend gave me this section of Wyoming in which to work and—there were many matters that roused my interest here besides horse-buying!

"Yet as a matter of fact I knew next to nothing of my grandfather's history in the Oregon country. One can understand why the matter was kept quiet by all concerned. But a little while before I went back to Cheyenne, the first time, Angus Duncan showed me a letter purporting to have been written by Sir John Colbaith to Carter Devonsher accusing him of having fraudulently obtained title to a tract of land belonging to the Hudson's Bay Company known as the Antelope Basin Grant. He claimed to have further papers bearing on the subject and offered to sell the lot to me for five thousand dollars. I couldn't see it, laughed at him and went away."

Peter was silent so long after this statement that Judge Jones cleared his throat impatiently and said, "That's what brought you back to Antelope Basin, I suppose!"

"I came back to Antelope Basin," said Peter slowly, "because I wanted to see Eve's country again. The Washington business dragged and I came out again hoping to learn from her mother that Eve had not yet sailed for France. Then as you know came Eve's great trouble. She was such a ripping sport—I had to see her through. When the trial began, I did not seek private information; but there were Tom Maine and Henry Worth and Mrs. Brownell and Minnie Duncan each coming to me with his or her little tale. And almost inadvertently out of these I began to piece together the story of Antelope Basin.

"It was not a savory story either for my grandfather or for Carter Devonsher. When the Hudson's Bay Company found that it must move north of parallel forty-nine it made over to Sir John Colbaith the Antelope Basin Grant, a tract of a hundred thousand acres which it obtained from a Spaniard named Sanch Del Mar. It was noted for the remarkable quality and quantity of its beaver pelts and my grandfather was to keep it as a great game preserve for the benefit of the Hudson's Bay Company.

"But when Sir John came to take possession, he found that Carter Devonsher, acting as agent for the Hudson's Bay Company, had had the deeds made out to himself. And Carter did not give up the land when my grandfather went after it! Curiously enough, Sir John didn't go back to the Company with the matter. Carter Devonsher claimed to have proof that when Sir John was very drunk he had had improper relations with the squaw who afterward married Elias Worth, and that John was the result. It sounds improbable but my grandfather evidently was afraid of the fire that caused so much smoke, for beyond writing certain letters to Carter Devonsher, he made no effort to obtain the land.

"All this I pieced together with, at first, no particular object save that of satisfying curiosity. There were many dramatic events those last days of the trial and I gave over everything to spend the time with Eve. A cable from the chief recalled me the night after Henry Worth's confession. I went at once to Washington to find my business there was a complete failure and must be attacked from a new angle and that I must see the chief personally about it. But on the night I was to have sailed I received a telegram saying that Eve was dying in the penitentiary at Rawlins. It was signed by the warden. I wired to the warden, demanding an explanation. He merely repeated his original message.

"I'M NOT clear in my mind as to what happened then," Peter said very simply. "It was as if the world had come to an end. Something cracked in my brain. My first clear recollection of the hours that followed my receiving of that telegram is of realizing that I'd been two days on the train without food. When I reached Rawlins I rushed to the penitentiary and was received at once by the warden; and I will say he was very suspicious of me. He was the most fatuous ass I've ever met. Henry Worth had got him to send a decoy message after convincing him that Henry had been employed by me in the German spy service. The warden was convinced that he was putting over one of the greatest coups of the war. Henry merely wanted to have a talk with me!

"I'll say Henry got the talk and in a way he never will forget or forgive. But his bitterness toward me didn't prevent his reading to me a paper the warden had been keeping for him. It purported to be a deed signed by Sir John Colbaith assigning the Antelope Basin Grant to John Worth. It probably is spurious, but I was determined to get possession of it. I think Henry had in mind some sort of trade offer to make me but the terrible wigging I'd given him set him so against me that he merely spent his time taunting me and calling me Cousin Peter. In some respects he was lucid, in others as mad as the March Hare. I've told you the rest except for the important item that he did not leave the deed with that fool of a warden. I believe it's in the envelope the sheriff has in his pocket."

"It is," said Sid complacently.

"Ah!" Peter sighed with relief. "I think that ends the explanation, friends."

"How did Henry explain the fact that he'd never sprung that deed before?" demanded Judge Jones.

"He said he'd never known of its existence until Minnie Duncan got it out of the famous iron box and made some sort of a trade with Henry after his arrest."

"You mean Minnie got into that box?" shouted Sid. "She couldn't have!"

"But she did," said Eve. "She showed you several papers, didn't she, Peter?"

"Yes, several."

Captain Andrews moved restlessly in his place beside the judge. "Well, Peter, what's the answer?"

"That's what I hope to find this evening," said Peter, "for tomorrow I must be on my way to England."

Judge Jones rubbed his beard. "I'd like to see that alleged deed, major."

"I'd like to have you," replied Peter, nodding to Sid.

Judge Jones donned his spectacles and moved closer to the fire. After a lengthy examination of the document he grunted: "A clumsy forgery. Looks to me as if it were something Henry's father and old Duncan cooked up. Henry hadn't the brain to do it." He put the paper into his pocket. "This whole matter must be cleared up. Eve's little property must be protected from all claims."

"Eve's property isn't so little," said Sid. "I'm going to make Minnie give back all the stuff the Duncans blackmailed out of the Devonshers. Pretty near ten thousand acres. I know a lot of it is sagebrush, but it will be great land if ever they get water onto it."

"I promised Minnie I wouldn't accept it," said Eve.

Sid gave her a look of surprise followed by one of extreme belligerency: "I'll bet you a hundred dollars you do take it back," he declared.

"I always thought a good deal of the land included in the Forest Reserve could be proved to belong to Eve." Judge Jones pushed out his lower lip thoughtfully. "Perhaps twenty-five thousand acres. Only the family had no money with which to carry on a legal fight and I didn't want to start something I couldn't finish."

"But what of all this!" exclaimed the captain. "You haven't the means either, Peter, to start a legal battle."

"Pshaw! Why, the major hasn't a chance in the world!" cried the judge. "Remember that I've gone over the contents of the iron box. Old Carter was no amateur thief. When he took over the Basin he took it so that he could not lose it, legally, at least."

Eve flushed. "Judge," she said suddenly, "if you had the means how much of the original tract do you think you could have returned to me?"

"About half of it," replied the judge. "I believe that the sales made by the Duncans to the English firm were fraudulent."

"What would you do, turn the ranchers out? I wouldn't want that," said Eve.

"Very few of the ranches are on the original grant," answered Judge Jones. "They are in the rich pockets of the mountains. As you know, most of Carter's stuff was fit only for range cattle."

"Judge," Eve spoke slowly, "I think I know where I can borrow the necessary funds. You go ahead and start legal proceedings to get back into my hands all the land you can without doing any one an injustice."

Judge Jones stared at Eve as if she had taken leave of her senses. Eve smiled.

"You wonder where on earth I'll raise the money, judge? Well, I'm going to ask Major Colbaith to get it for me. And when you have finished the legal end, I shall return the Antelope Basin Grant to the Colbaith family."

"No, indeed, you shall not!" exclaimed Peter. "You may have the money, of course, but you shall not turn the land over to me. I was trying to establish my claims on the chance that I could gather the old property together and return it to you."

THERE was a sudden silence. Even the rain had ceased to slash across the roof. It was the judge who finally gasped, "So this is the way the trial ends!"

"No, it is not." Peter's tone was emphatic. "Eve will keep the property. Old Sir John had only a legal claim to it. By every right of suffering, the Grant should go to Eve."

"Yes!" cried the judge. "First thing you know, major, I will be accusing a Britisher of generosity."

Sid chuckled. "'I am the law,'" he quoted. "Judge, you slipped from your well-known hard-boiled legal stand, then."

Judge Jones was watching Eve and seemed not to hear. She was rising tremblingly from the couch. "No! No!" she cried. "Don't you all see? This is the Devonsher opportunity to make restitution. This is the sort of thing I've sought so blindly."

The three men stared at her. She was extraordinarily appealing in the fire glow. But Peter's firm lips did not weaken.

"I cannot accept it from you, Eve," he repeated.

It was at this moment that the judge did the most unselfish thing of his life. He turned to the sheriff and said: "Sid, it's stopped raining. Let's start up to Rawlins right now with Henry. I want to have a séance with the warden while I'm still mad."

The captain smiled. "I want to go to bed. Where is my bed, somebody?"

"You bed down in Eve's covered wagon with the major"—Sid was buttoning up his Mackinaw—"and let Eve sleep here by the fire."

Peter and Eve watched the sudden preparations for departure in silence. Eve's teeth were set for a winning battle. This was the answer to her life problem. Peter should not fail her.

The captain bade them good night and followed the sheriff out of the room. The judge stopped in the doorway to say abruptly, "Don't be a fool, Eve." Then Peter and Eve were left alone.

Peter began at once. "You understand, don't you, Eve, why I can't allow you to do this?"

"A mistaken chivalry, I suppose," replied Eve, who was seated again while Peter stood before her.

"Not at all!" retorted the major. "It's only fair play. I cannot think of accepting such a gift from you of all people!"

Eve's lips twitched nervously. "You can take nothing from a horse-thief or a potential murderer, I suppose."

"Eve!" Peter started as if she had struck him. "I know I deserve that. I was a cad after the trial."

"You were not a cad. I deserved your contempt."

"Contempt! Oh, Eve! Don't you see that what I said to you that night I said because I was angry at you as I never before had been angry at any one? I felt that you had let me build up the love of my life on deception. And I was glad, Eve, glad when you took the stand you did about marrying me!"

"Do you need to say all this to me again?" asked Eve. "That's all ended. We have only the land matter to settle."

Peter did not appear to hear her protest. "How little I knew myself! Why, Eve, when I received that telegram, the anger died out of me as if water had quenched a fire. And suddenly I knew that I'd cast aside country, ambition, faith with my own to kneel beside your bed and ask your forgiveness before you died. And had the telegram been honest and had you actually been dying there in Rawlins, I'd have been grateful all my life, no matter what the cost, had I reached you in time to hear you say that you loved me and that you forgave me."

He stopped and Eve saw that his eyes were full of tears. After a moment he went on. "I've learned a startling lesson. A man prides himself on his will power and his settled habits of work, on the steadfastness of his ambitions, on the impersonal quality of his loyalty to his country. When he reaches my age he believes that nothing can dislodge him from these familiar ways of his. And yet, Eve, when that telegram reached me, all that I had been dropped from me in the space of time required to read the message. You became my entire world."

Eve hid her trembling hands behind her. "And yet all this has come to you for a woman you do not respect."

"Not respect! Eve, I'm on my knees to you. On that ghastly train ride across the country, the blindness dropped from me and I understood all that you had done, all your loyalty, all your bravery, all the gallant fight you had made against terrible circumstance. I am bitterly ashamed of myself."

EVE stared up at him. She knew that only the deepest emotion could have forced this man of the world to avow himself so deeply in the wrong. She did not want him so to abase himself, but before she could utter protest he exclaimed, sadly:

"Then, if it means so much to you, I will accept the land from you, Eve. And if you can't forgive me I will go away and never trouble you again."

"I have nothing to forgive you, Peter."

The man drew a long breath. "Eve!" he whispered. He drew her slowly to her feet, trying to smile. "Say it to me another way, Eve—the way I warned you once you would say it to me."

Eve looked into Peter's eyes and her voice was uncertain as she whispered, "Light, Peter of England, and look to your saddle."

Peter's face, flushed, eager, pleading, came very close to hers. "Eve, my darling, once more, will you marry me?"

"Yes, Peter, yes," answered Eve and he drew her close within his arms and kissed her on the lips.

And so the trial was ended.

THE END

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# Truth

CULTURE, the thing of which the soft-mouthed, white-collared folk prate and prattle, is a lie. The only worth-while culture is a great simplicity—an understanding insight into the minds of one's soul-hungry fellow men.

To be cultured one needs no learning.

Those who would know the Truth need no brazen bells to waken them to worship; no temple roofs 'neath which to kneel. Beauty and Truth lie ever free and fair along the open meadows, beside life's bold wide highway. Courage and a knightly tenderness are our best jewels: not whimpered prayers to a God but half believed in—a God whom cowards fear; dreading His punishments. Men who believe in Justice need fear no punishment beyond their manly bearing. My God lies at ease with tramps in a barn, and swings a brave pick in the sewer ditch where common men are.

BILL ADAMS.

# LAME

## *Volstock, a Cowboy Vagabond, Still in Argentina, Introduces Some New Methods in Dealing with a Rival in Love*

### By Arthur Mills

Illustration by D. C. Hutchison

DONATO ran the lasso through his gnarled old hands, examining his work. Satisfied, he coiled the rope and placed it beside a rebenque (a short heavy riding whip used by the peons) he had just repaired.

I had come out to sit with the old man as I often did.

When the day's work was done, Donato loved to linger under the old ombu, suck his maté, and watch the men ride in from the "camp."

He had been a great cattle man himself in his day. He could remember when there were no wire fences in Argentina, and each man's cattle grazed at will. Those were the days before the frigoríficos came, when cattle in the remoter parts were killed and sold for their hides, and a peon ate as much meat as he needed.

"Not as now," said the old man scornfully, "when we are given for meat the cows that are old and barren."

The sun lay low on the horizon, flooding all the rolling lands with red. In ones and twos the camp men galloped home on their native-bred, wiry horses. As each man came in he flung himself to the ground, undid the broad girths, off-saddled, and played a hose over his sweat-stained horse. This rough grooming done, the horse was turned loose onto the "camp" and the peon, gathering his saddle under his arm, clanked off uneasily in his great spurs toward his quarters.

"Yes," continued Donato, pursuing the vexed question of his food, "they would send now even a lame steer to the frigorífico if he could be made to walk."

This I knew was a most acid remark, for in Argentina there is only one recognized procedure with cattle that are lame. The first peon that notices the unfortunate animal draws his knife and cuts its throat. An animal that is lame is a hindrance to his fellows, and of no further use.

Donato's keen old eyes looked across the corral to an open shed where a man was tending a log fire. Over the fire, skewered to the ground by long spikes, great joints of meat roasted slowly.

This was the peons' kitchen, presided over by Pedro, an old gaucho who many years before had lost an arm in an encounter with a stallion.

"Huh!" said Donato, as Pedro laboriously placed a fresh log on the fire with his remaining arm. "Of what use is a cook that is lame?"

I repressed a smile, knowing that Donato spoke in all seriousness, for in the remoter districts the peons use the expression "lame" about themselves. Away where we were, up in Entre Rios, they even regard a man who has suffered facial disfigurement in a knife fight as ridiculous and inferior to themselves.

Donato, still regarding Pedro, spat expressively, making it clear it would be little loss to any one if the old injured gaucho shared the fate of maimed cattle and had his throat cut, too.

Donato and I were still upon the question of meat when I saw his eye brighten and, following his glance, I saw a girl coming toward us from the pulpería. It was Leonita, bringing the evening maté.

A MOST personable young lady was Leonita, daughter of Gomes, the keeper of the store. Her eyes were large and dark, shining like crystals against a velvet cushion. She was slim and moved with the lithe grace of her people. Moreover, her father was rich as are most camp storekeepers. So it was small wonder more than one man desired to marry her.

Leonita, I knew, was seventeen. Donato had told me so, mentioning the question of her marriage. Gomes had plans for her with Miguel, the *capataz's* son. Such a marriage would be a good match, the capataz having a brick house, a garden, and the charge of seventy peons. It was, however, an open secret that Leonita had little liking for Miguel, having eyes only for Volstock, a fair-haired young Russian peon about whom folk knew little except his name.

In the "camp" the drinking of maté occupies time. The bowl was first passed to me and I sucked the *bombilla* slowly till a faint gurgle told that it was empty, when I handed it back to Leonita, who stood gravely by my side. Leonita repaired to the house to refill the bowl and Donato drank, then I, then Donato again.

We came to our third maté; Leonita stood between us, grave and motionless as custom prescribes. I wondered how much and in what ways she differed from her European sisters. Had she a will of her own? Would she marry the capataz's son? Her eyes fascinated me. They were black as night and very bright, the true eyes of Indian blood that are often much admired in the South American women seen in Europe. I could imagine Leonita in Europe; in a London ballroom, say, her arms and shoulders bare, her superb young figure wrapped in a filmy modern dress instead of the gray Manchester cotton skirt and black manta.

Watching her, I saw that she was looking out over the plain toward the gate through which the peons came. The men had by now mostly returned. There was only one figure in sight, a man on a bay horse. He rode as all the "camp" men ride, bridle hand held high, right arm extended, rising and falling with the motion of his horse. Even at that distance every line of his figure revealed a born horseman. He galloped straight up to the ombu tree, pulled up his horse, jumped to the ground, and wished Donato good evening.

The old man answered his greeting, looking critically at the bay horse.

The young peon was a jaunty-looking fellow with a silk handkerchief knotted loosely round his neck and tucked into his open shirt, and a black felt hat with down-turned rim pressed over fair curly hair. His eyes of very bright pale blue had a queerly penetrating look.

"Has the rebenque been done?" he asked.

"It will be tomorrow," answered Donato.

"Tomorrow, very well," said the peon, who knew as I knew and as Donato knew that the rebenque should have been ready days before. Indeed, I knew it to be the one Donato had set aside with the lasso as finished and that it was only his inherent dislike of doing anything quickly that made him reply "*mañana.*"

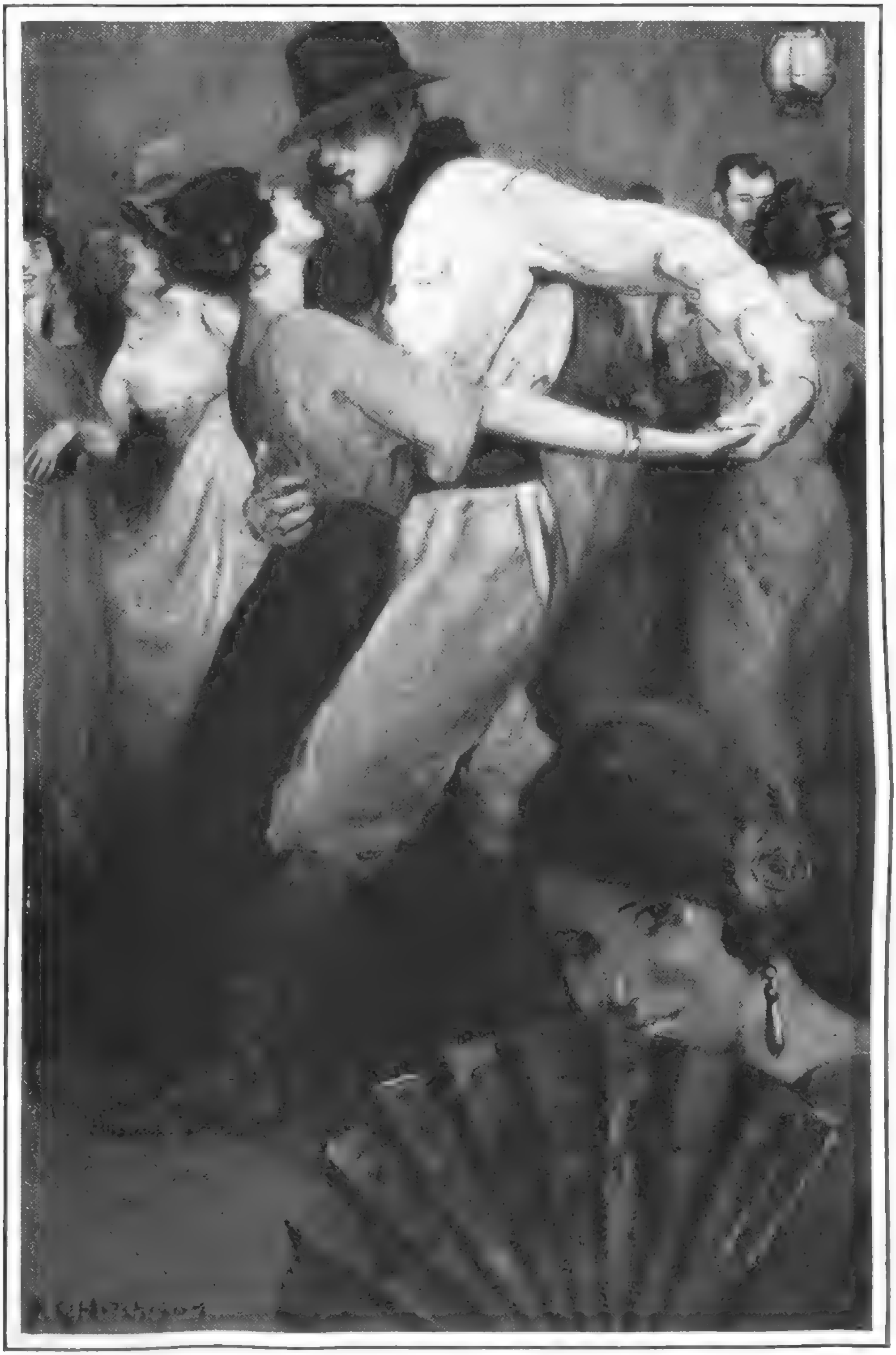
The young peon was Volstock, the Russian. So long as Leonita stood there, he appeared in no hurry to go, or to care much whether the rebenque was ready or not. He lingered on, talking to Donato of trivial matters and casting sly glances at Leonita.

While Volstock stood there, another peon rode by on a young, restless-looking chestnut horse; seeing Leonita, he took his hat off with a flourish and at the same time touched the flanks of the chestnut with his great spurs. The chestnut responded immediately, leaving the ground with all four legs at once, head between forelegs, back arched to a semicircle. It was a complete, sudden and perfect buck—too sudden for the peon, who came straight over the chestnut's neck, falling at Leonita's feet.

KNOWING the mortal affront that even a smile would offer, I kept my face steady. Volstock, however, laughed uproariously. For a moment I thought the man who had been thrown would draw his knife; but he kept control, remounted, and with an angry glance at Volstock rode away.

"Who is he?" I asked Gomes, who had joined us.

"Miguel, son of the capataz," answered



**Slowly, languorously, luxuriously they danced. In that dim lamp-lit barn Leonita and Volstock stood out lovers for all the world to see.**

Gomes, quite evidently chagrined at his intended son-in-law disgracing himself by falling off a horse.

"He will have a proper wedding when he marries," Gomes continued, talking *at* his daughter but not looking at her, "with a priest from Goya."

Volstock of course would not be able to afford a priest and unless he waited till one came round, his marriage would have to be conducted on the unconventional and free and easy lines common in the remoter camp, which are in point of law no marriages at all.

"Better if he saved his pesos to buy a quieter horse," said Volstock.

A few nights later the men held a baile. Now in the "camp" bailes are infrequent but very considerable occasions. The peons come in from neighboring estancias, and stay the night and sometimes through the following day. The orchestra consists of a piano if there is one, sometimes a violin, and always a couple of guitars. After dinner we went down from the house to join in the dancing, which took place in a long barn.

There were quite a hundred people present, the odor of warm human bodies mingled with a smell of oil from four lamps hung from the rafters. Benches were placed along the sides of the barn. In the intervals between dances the women-folk sat on these benches while the men grouped in the center of the floor. I noticed young Miguel, the capataz's son, a tall swarthy man. He was one of the prominent figures of the ball, being regarded by all the women as the most eligible bachelor present—an altogether superior person to the ordinary "camp" peon, drawing a salary of fifteen to twenty dollars a month.

I looked round for Leonita and saw her sitting with her father. Her costume was simple. She had wrapped over her undershirt and round her body a long-fringed black shawl, and in her hair stuck a large tortoiseshell comb. Flushed a little with the exertion of dancing, her eyes shining with excitement, she looked superb.

Volstock was missing. Thinking if Leonita was there he would not be far away, I looked about and saw him at last in the inner room where a makeshift bar had been rigged up. He was drinking a glass of cana, taking it neat, Argentine-fashion, followed by a glass of water. He asked me to drink with him. Our glasses had just been filled when Miguel came in. The capataz's son had about him a swaggering air, over-noticeable in a gathering essentially democratic.

He brushed past me, walked to the bar, and ordered four glasses of liquor. Why four, I wondered. He did not ask Volstock or myself to join him. Volstock, after giving Miguel one quick hostile glance, turned his back.

As we stood there the four glasses were explained. The capataz, Gomes, and old Donato entered. Miguel presented each with a glass. The three older men and the younger raised their glasses ceremoniously. The capataz, a huge man with a big paunch, bowed to Gomes and Donato and murmured some words I could not catch. Donato in his turn bowed and replied. Four glasses were raised in the air, one word said low this time by young Miguel, four rims tinkled, and they were about to drink when a tumbler crashed to the ground.

I, standing by Volstock, saw him throw the tumbler to the earth with all his force. The others did not notice this.

"An accident," laughed Volstock, ordering the man to fill a fresh glass, which he drank at a gulp, immediately after leaving the room.

Old Donato beckoned to me.

"You will join us, señor; we drink the health of Señor Gomes's daughter and her future husband." He indicated young Miguel with a nod of his head.

So that was what Volstock had heard. I drank young Miguel's health, murmuring the conventional congratulations.

"The announcement will be tonight," said the capataz. "You will be present."

I resolved to be present, for I had never seen the picturesque camp ceremony of announcing a betrothal, though I knew something of the details.

We finished our drink and went back to the ballroom. The band was playing a dreamy tango. At first it was difficult, in the haze of smoke, to make out who was dancing.

YOUNG Miguel stood by me, his shoulder pressed against mine in the crowded doorway. Suddenly I felt the muscles of his arm tighten and, looking round, saw his eyes aflame with rage.

In the center of the room, locked in each other's arms, Leonita and Volstock danced.

Those who have seen the tango only in London or other great European cities may hardly realize El Tango Argentino as Leonita and Volstock danced it. All the bending, dipping, and intricate steps that so-called exhibition dancers do over here are unknown in Argentina. As the Argentines dance the tango, whether in a fashionable hotel or on the mud floor of a camp drinking store, it is a caress to music, subtle, insidious, intoxicating.

I shall not easily forget that tango as those two danced it. The man, his wide *bombachias* (native riding breeches) tucked into his long black leather boots, knife thrust through the broad belt round his waist, gay-colored silk handkerchief, reserved for gala nights, knotted round his open throat; the girl, with the black shawl twined closely round her slim figure, tortoiseshell comb in her luxuriant hair, lips parted, eyes looking upward into Volstock's eyes.

Slowly, languorously, luxuriously they danced, the man's arm pressed tightly to the girl's shoulder, the girl's whole body utterly surrendered to the tune. In that dim lamp-lit barn they stood out lovers for all the world to see.

Miguel stood rigid, watching the girl who, it had been arranged, should be his bride, dancing with the man who had insulted him that morning.

In Argentina, indeed in all the lands that have known the courtly influence of Spain, a quarrel is never picked boorishly. However studied the insult may be, it will always be offered suavely.

Miguel waited till the music stopped, crossed the room, bowed to Leonita, and asked if she would care for refreshment. He ignored Volstock's presence.

"You will be tired after so much exertion," he said.

"I do not think the exertion has been great," said Volstock, placing himself between Leonita and Miguel.

Miguel ignored the interruption.

"No greater, perhaps, than to stay upon the back of a tame horse," continued Volstock, into his blue eyes stealing the twinkle I was beginning to know now as a danger signal.

"Or to twist the tail of a *criollo*," he continued as he saw Miguel's face twitch at the first insult.

Now the *criollos* are the old-fashioned native cattle of Argentina; the expression is used sometimes meaning that a man has more black blood in him than white. The insult was complete and must bring a quick answer. Miguel moved his right hand to his hip; his fingers within an inch or two of the handle of his knife. Volstock stayed motionless, his eyes fixed upon Miguel's hand.

"There would be more room for us to continue our discussion outside," he suggested.

The two men bowed. Volstock escorted Leonita to her seat. As he passed me, he said:

"Come with me, *ché*."

I could not refuse the appeal, for in the camp the word "*ché*" is rarely used to a foreigner, and means that the stranger is taken into a binding intimacy.

Miguel was waiting in the porch for us, poncho slung over shoulder, rebenque in his hand. Volstock had also brought his poncho and rebenque.

I knew from these signs that a fight was inevitable.

A lantern had been placed on the ground outside the porch to guide late comers to the ball. Volstock picked up this lantern and the three of us stepped out into the darkness. We proceeded for several minutes in silence until we came to the gate leading to the peons' quarters; through this we passed out to the camp.

"Will this place do?" Volstock asked Miguel. "The English señor perhaps will be good enough to hold up the lamp."

"It will do," agreed Miguel, "if the English señor will be so good as to hold the lamp high; it is not good to fight by a flickering light."

For a moment I thought to refuse, not caring to hold a lamp up for two men to try to kill each other by. But they would fight in any case, darkness or light; they might as well have light.

EACH man now took off his poncho and wrapped it round his left arm; then took his rebenque in his left hand and drew his knife with his right.

The knives, used equally for skinning

cattle, eating food, and fighting, had blades about a foot in length, running to a sharp point. Each man held his knife by the handle in the hollow of his fingers, the sharp edge of the blade uppermost.

They then took up a distance from each other of about six feet. I stood a little to one side immediately opposite the two, holding the lamp as steadily as I could.

A singular stillness lay upon the camp. Then one of the men spoke. Which I could not tell.

"*Vamos!*" he asked quietly.

"*Sí*," answered the other.

Neither man moved. Their rigidity was uncanny; each crouched, right foot drawn back, left hand holding the rebenque, left arm wrapped in poncho; right hand clutching knife held close to thigh; eyes fixed on eyes—waiting.

They stayed so, as it seemed, interminably. Then one moved to the left; the other to the right, following his adversary, step by step. Thus they made a complete circle.

I watched those knives glittering in the insufficient light; those dark poised figures, the white outline of the rawhide rebenques protruding from the black swathed arms. How long would this game of cat watching cat continue?

Then, just as I was preparing to change the lantern from one hand to the other, Miguel sprang, his knife held low, pointing straight at Volstock's stomach. Volstock stood firm, his own knife close to his thigh. Watching, I felt that nothing could save him from the other's blade. But at the very moment I thought the knife had pierced him, he gave a quick blow with his rebenque and turned the thrust. Volstock in his turn struck as Miguel stood unbalanced. The bright steel disappeared and I expected to see Miguel fall. But Miguel had caught the knife in the poncho wrapped round his arm.

The men sprang apart. Again they paced catlike round each other, again after an interminable wait they sprang. I heard a blow as of steel striking some hard substance, a cry, and saw a blade flying in the air.

One man had knocked away the knife of the other with his rebenque. By the law of every knife fight in the camp one man would now die.

Forgetting my own impartial rôle, I stepped forward, lantern still held high. At the same moment I saw Volstock still held his knife. His eyes shone as he came slowly toward his helpless enemy. Miguel stood still, his rebenque, his last hope, trembling a little in his hand.

Volstock feinted, dodged in under the raised rebenque and drove his knife straight at Miguel's stomach. And then, for I saw it clearly, at the very instant that he could have driven the knife into the defenseless flesh, he stopped, and swept his right arm upward.

Miguel gave a shrill cry; the rebenque fell from his fingers.

Volstock stepped back.

"Come! We will get back to the baile," he said to me.

I hesitated, looking at Miguel.

"Come! He will live," said Volstock. And I saw to my astonishment that this queer mad Russian actually was laughing.

Miguel certainly did not seem seriously injured. His hand held in front of his face, he was executing a sort of war dance, at the same time searching blindly for his knife.

No one had seen us leave the baile and we got back unobserved. Reaching the doorway, I saw that some special function was taking place. Dancing had stopped; the whole company stood about the floor, looking toward a platform at the far end.

GOMES was standing on this platform, beside him Donato, his proud old head flung back. Behind him, looking very small and helpless, her eyes drooping to the ground, stood Leonita.

"Señores," began Gomes, omitting after the Spanish-American fashion all reference to the presence of ladies, "I announce to you tonight the betrothal of my daughter. Her future husband is the son of a man you all know well" (loud applause while Gomes bowed in the direction of the capataz). "None is quicker with the lasso, none sits more firmly on the back of an unbroken horse." (Gomes forced himself to forget Miguel's morning mishap.) "He is active, young, his limbs intact; I am proud to have Don Miguel a member of my house."

Having made his speech, Gomes withdrew to the side of the platform. It was now the turn of the capataz to bring his son forward and present him to the company. After this the young couple would stand side by side on the platform, while a running comment on their merits as mates was carried on by the remainder of the assembly; they would then lead the dance of honor round the room in which the rest of the company would join.

Before all this could begin, however, there was a hitch, the hitch being that the capataz could not find his son.

While Gomes was speaking, Volstock and I had stood unobtrusively at the back of the crowd. Now the capataz was on his feet looking round the room. Suddenly Volstock slipped behind me; turning round, I saw young Miguel in the door. He had put his poncho on over his shirt and held a handkerchief against his face; he seemed dazed.

The capataz saw his son, climbed down from the platform and took him by the arm. Young Miguel struggled and the crowd laughed, considering a display of shyness on the part of the bridegroom amusing. The capataz dragged his son forcibly to the platform, turned the dazed man round, and amid more laughter, tried to tear the handkerchief away from his face. Old Donato came to help and he and the capataz each taking one of Miguel's arms, with a quick jerk, bared his face.

An instant the crowd looked at the man in front of them; then a man laughed and a woman screamed.

Don Miguel, bridegroom elect of Leonita, *had lost the point of his nose.*

VOLSTOCK'S own explanation of the matter when later he and I and old Donato forgathered for a final glass of cana, was deliciously simple.

"It was better than to kill him. I should have had to leave the estancia if I did that. I knew Leonita's father would never allow her to marry a man who was 'lame.' Would he, señor?" Volstock turned to old Donato.

"Huh!" grunted the old gaucho, who disliked the storekeeper. "Even Gomes would not allow that."

Another story of the tramp on horseback in November EVERYBODY'S.

Beginning in November

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By Robert A. Simon

WHEN Jimmy Wrome fell ill his shrewd doctor, guided by the French proverb "Cherchez la femme," prescribed a course of detective stories as a counter-irritant. Jimmy obeyed—with astonishing results.

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*The Startling End of a Visit to Monte Carlo*

# CRUSTS

## *Rescuing Kidnaped Millionaires Is No Joke, When Your Friends Stand Ready to Knock You Over the Head for Doing It*

## By S. Carleton

**Illustration by Lawrence Herndon**

*Begin this serial with any instalment. The story up to this point is here.*

SO REDUCED were Mr. Calthrop's circumstances that when a beautiful young girl approached him as he stood, hungry-eyed, before the Café de Paris in Monte Carlo, and offered to take him in if he would dance with her, he readily agreed. Before he left her she gave him a slip of paper bearing a short message and the address of an inexpensive hostelry up on the mountain. The note that she slipped unnoticed into his pocket explained many things: she was a professional dancer and had come there to dance before Luigi, an American theatrical manager who would be for one day at Monte Carlo. Her dancing partner had strained a tendon and she had called on Calthrop, having seen him that day feeding a stray dog, rather than resort to another professional. To the paper she had pinned a thousand-franc note.

The next morning Calthrop sought the proprietress of La Turbie and found that there was vacant only one small room opening off the kitchen which he might have for eight francs a day.

"In the next room," Francine explained, "there is an old man who was brought here by two men. He is very ill and must have absolute quiet. But if you promise to make no sound—you and the dog—I see no reason—" She hesitated; Francine was a businesslike woman.

That night while he was going down on the funicular Calthrop's eye was caught by a paragraph in the *Daily Mail*. Mr. Jabez Scholl had some time ago sold his entire string of theaters in America and disappeared with the money. Yesterday he had turned up at Monte Carlo accompanied by his son and his secretary. The article would have made little impression upon Calthrop had he not seen, that very evening, Mr. Scholl and his companion at the green diagrammed table. Scholl's old wizened face was not prepossessing; his companion's skin was parchment-finished. Calthrop felt an aversion for them both.

Later, in his room at La Turbie, he accidentally knocked over the small table, sending the candlesticks on it crashing to the floor. Immediately Crusts set up an earsplitting howl. From the next room, through the papered-over door, came an old man's furious, screaming groan: "Here, you there with the dog! Quick!" Then came another man's voice saying, "I'm here," and finally several sounds like the squeak of a dying rat.

After Francine had gone to her bed in the attic that night, Calthrop missed his dog and fearing that Crusts had followed her through the service door into the front of her house, decided to go through the door himself. He came to the old gentleman's room, and there on the bed beside the frail-looking old man was Crusts. Coming at his master's silent signal, he bore in his mouth a call for help written on the back of a Naples bank receipt for a fabulous sum of money. But then Calthrop heard sounds and retreated. While he was still within hearing the secretary and the doctor came in and said enough to show collusion in some sort of extortion; he did not hear Francine's dismayed exclamation at the service door, at finding him, as she thought, one of the same group.

He returned to his room with Crusts and, as soon as he was sure the old gentleman was alone, cut open the papered-over door, went through and pushed in front of the old man his written message, repeating it softly into his ear. Stepping around to the front, he was startled to see the face of the American millionaire Jabez Scholl—the same face that he had seen first in the *Daily Mail* as arriving from Naples at Monte Carlo, and then that very day in the flesh, in the Casino!

CALTHROP'S hand went out to close the terrified lips. But there was no need. Jabez Scholl was in the shadow of death, his meager soul leaped to an incredible gleam of light through it, but his face never changed. He stared through his blue spectacles at the tall man casually produced by a vacant clothes cupboard, ejected a blue wad of chewed paper from his mouth to the floor by the bed—paper that was barely damp, except bloodily, in streaks—and nodded. His thick tongue stumbled on a word, and made no sound. Mr. Calthrop did not particularly notice the spat-out blue paper, but he had once been lost in the Arizona desert. He went light as a cat to Scholl's washstand for the water-bottle.

"Thirst—the plain devils! Here—not so quick!" he swore softly as Scholl began to drink like a madman.

Scholl got hold of himself and sipped. Slow tears of relief were in his eyes and blood-stained water on his chin, but he shaped words with almost no pause.

"Stay where you are. Take back that thing." He motioned to the bank receipt Calthrop had let drop on the bed. "Keep it. Say, where am I?"

Calthrop told him.

"I guess it's all the same." Scholl was astoundingly quiet. "If I'd known there was a back door on your side of hell I'd have been easier. How's it work?"

"Papered over. No lock. Didn't you hear me coming?"

"No. Given you up when you went off with the dog."

"Why didn't you beckon?"

"Doc could see me from his room; I'm not a fool! They—those two—know about your back door?"

Calthrop shook his head.

"Where are they?"

"Room with the mirror—two of them. Didn't see the servant."

"Out! Cleared this afternoon when doc went out and hasn't come back. Thought doc had gone out again to look for him when I squeaked at the dog. Why didn't you get in here before?"

"Didn't know."

"How d'ye know now—the receipt?"

Once more Mr. Calthrop shook his head; he had been too near putting the receipt down to lunacy and leaving it at that to enlarge on the name he could not read.

"No, just happened! Saw your picture in a paper and you—I mean the other man—at the Casino and that secretary up here, and added them up."

"Casino, hey? They've gall! Why—"

"Don't waste time on that. Come on out of here!"

"Yes." Mr. Jabez Scholl smiled. He sat up a little higher in his bed and cast back the blankets with a skinny hand. His old and ugly ankles wore steel bracelets running on a dog chain padlocked round the bed. "Got a key?"

Calthrop made no immediate answer. He was inspecting the steel anklets and giving them up as impossible. But the chain he grinned at contemptuously. Except as absolutely filling the bill for an elderly man with no leg muscles the chain was nonsense. He produced the ordinary, rather thick pocket-knife of the working classes that had disposed of the papered-over door.

"I don't know how much time we've got." He was delicate-handed on the chain, listening acutely over his knife for sounds from the mirror room.

"*I* have till tomorrow morning!" Mr. Scholl was dry, soundless, and convincing.

"They'd never dare." Calthrop's real attention lay on the door and the red-tiled hall; but if two men could talk unheard in the mirror room two other men could talk in Scholl's if one of them kept his ears open. "Anyhow, they can't now."

"They'd never dare—anything raw"—softly. "They— Gimme something to eat, quick!" He pointed to a row of dishes on a side table across the room.

Calthrop stared at all Francine's carefully cooked dinner, untouched; sidestepped to the table and dipped up a bare two tablespoons of soup in a cup. "Here, go slow," he said, handing it to Scholl.

"Go slow! Go nothing's what they've played on me. Bring it in—leave it—take it out—and all I ever get's a sort of a dog biscuit when they're afraid I'll fade on them. And the smell! I don't know how many times I've half wrenched my feet off trying to get loose over to that smell! But the water was the worst—in the nights! I guess I'd have sold my soul in the nights for a drink of water. Only—well, they've got tired, with me sticking out this way! Want me to sign a check tonight, and if I don't sign it—" His teeth clicked on his cup. "I'm a sick man and that doc's clever. I guess any kind of an operation would do!"

"Shut up!"

MR. CALTHROP felt unpleasant; also the frail-looking chain was less manageable than he had supposed. For an instant he considered the door into the red-tiled passage between him and the mirror room, but to bolt it on himself and the chained-up Jabez was useless with two more doors in his rear and no further allies in the house than Francine and a cinnamon dog; and he would have done well to leave out Francine. The widow Caussade was not in the house; had not been this hour past. She was seven-eighths of the way down to Monte Carlo, impartially cursing the rack-and-pinion train that did not run in the night and Mr. Calthrop. But since he did not know he did not worry. He realized unemotionally that the man who started on this kind of job without a revolver was a qualified fool, and turned his head to Scholl.

"What d'ye want done? Police?"

"Police!" For one instant Scholl's face worked. "Police, nothing! I won't have any noise or talk. I want to get out. I—"

"Quiet! I'll get you out." How to do it was another matter. "How did you ever get in with this lot?"

"Did it myself—all my own idea"—bitterly. "Back in Chicago my wife's a Baptist: prayer-meeting kind, Wednesdays; the home, evenings—all evenings; didn't even know I owned those theaters. I guessed, before I died, Wilson and I'd get in with the boys and see some life. I'd only had him a month, but I didn't believe anybody could get ahead of *me!* Why, that man—that one you saw done up like me—I thought it was a good joke when he turned up on the steamer coming over; I used to laugh when I got him in my stateroom and watched him act me; *laugh!* I never smelt a thing till I'd bought that yacht down in Naples off a dago I couldn't talk to and had a little argument with Wilson about money. I got a feeling in my stomach then of the kind of a place I was at. I said I had no money with me."

"But the money that was in the papers—that you'd never banked after you sold your movies?"

"I guess I remembered that money"—Jabez Scholl's face set—"seeing I had it on me!—the whole parcel of checks just as I got 'em, only Wilson didn't know. I said there was no hurry to be giving him money that minute, and I said I was sick. I was, too—scared sick; and I wasn't sure why then. Only I got up where I was lying down on my bed and went over to that bank with those checks"—he nodded toward the receipt in Calthrop's pocket—"and no one but me knew I'd done it. I went to sea to come here in my new yacht without a damn cent on me except my pocket roll; and that's all I know till I woke up in this place with a strange doc and a gunman of a servant that said I'd been drinking so hard they'd had to chain me up."

"But who paid—this—the yacht—everything?"

"Dunno." He licked the inside of his empty cup. "Unless my pocket roll did Wilson till now. I know it wasn't me. But it didn't get their goat the way I meant: all it did was to get Wilson out into the light. I guess he hadn't meant to show up here unless things got so that he had to, and he'd went kind of far to go back. I expect I'll last till tomorrow morning if I sign a good American check for him tonight, but I won't last—any kind of a way—till tomorrow night. You see, he don't know about that receipt; none of them know about it; they don't know where the money *is!* Over here the banks don't rush you with a check-book: they wait till they find out if your deposit's good, especially me laying down enough to buy their whole dago bank—why, I *couldn't* have drawn on it! So I didn't have any give-away checks on me for that damn secretary to forge."

"What did you have?"

"Nothing—but a couple of left-overs on a Chicago bank Wilson wouldn't dare monkey with. It'd be different here; he could pull it off easy enough with a foreign bank. If he knew where I'd deposited that money he couldn't scrabble round fast enough for the checks on it; but he don't know! He ain't even sure I brought the money over. You see, I slid that deposit receipt along into the hem of the only thing he didn't go over with a rip-saw, and that's this"—he nodded down at his red flannel dressing-gown—"that they carried me off the yacht in. How they got me off, I dunno; I guess they kind of juggled me and the other man round till I stood and watched him go! But I had the receipt all right. Only tonight I kind of realized it would be no use to me this time tomorrow night and I had to get it where Wilson wasn't; so I palmed it on you and the dog."

"Great Mike!" There was still no one coming out of the mirror room. "You took a chance on me!"

"Didn't have any other paper," Scholl returned indifferently. "Besides, I had to get rid of it. Wilson's gone that far on me he'll have to finish. He'll never dare let me go now and he can't keep me here or anywhere else with no way to pay the bill; I know that. He was up this morning with my last American check for me to sign—that's how I had the pen to write on that receipt. But I wasn't doing any signing, especially with doc away and the servant clearing out three minutes after him and never coming back; I guess doc was out watching for him when you upset your furniture to wake the dead. And I wasn't going to have Wilson and that other man you saw done up like me galloping down to that Bank Commercial Naples to get my other money over my cold remains, either. I guessed I'd work the dog for you."

"How did you"—Calthrop checked, the obstinate chain parted under his hand—"know I wasn't their man?"

"Weren't so quiet as you thought. Heard you speak to your dog till I kind of knew you'd sense—and to that damn woman!"

"Francine?"

"France anything! She's in it, over her head. Do you s'pose she sees all my meals stay here and go away as they came in and isn't in it?—she knows I never get fed. Besides, when first I came I called out to her all day; I *told* her! She knows what's doing. Only she's getting big pay."

"Talk lower! That's rot." Yet for one instant Mr. Calthrop wondered. But she would never have let him the room nor begged him to stay; it *was* rot. "It was no use your yelling; she doesn't know English."

"She knows yells; they're all one language! Besides, she— Never mind her"—furiously. "You getting those things off?"

"Yes." It was no time to ponder on Francine; the cut chain would slip through the locked anklets at a touch and it would not hurt Scholl to wear them under his socks. "Don't move till I say. Where are your clothes?"

"There." Scholl jerked his head to the cupboard, a changed Scholl, bolt up, electrified. "All I've got—on the floor. Guess there's socks and slippers under them. Land above, man—quick!"

CALTHROP nodded. It might be a cheap way to remove Mr. Scholl but it would be a joyfully nerve-racking one for the secretary; also he had no use for sensational exits. He moved to the cupboard; wheeled—rigid—in the door. "Keep your feet still—pull the bedclothes up! They're coming!" His muted voice reached a suddenly gray-faced Scholl. "Steady! I'll stay with it!"

Behind his blue spectacles the missing millionaire's terrified eyes went blank with shock. But he had his wits in it. He hauled up the bedclothes, gestured wildly at Calthrop with the flat of his hand, and lay still. Mr. Calthrop nodded; he backed into the cupboard against the near wall on the useful side of the door, the side away from the hinges and the forlorn heap of Jabez Scholl's clothes. The cupboard door closed on him crack-shut, as he had found it. Even if it were opened he was not likely to be seen, till it was too late for seeing. He had just time to flatten himself. Scholl's secretary stood a yard away from Scholl, the bearded man at his heels.

But there was to be no raw work; Scholl was right there.

"Signed that check?" asked the secretary blandly.

"Why, no!" His employer, keeping his ankles still and reinforced by the knowledge that his money was with Calthrop, was just as bland. "I ate it."

"You what?"

"Ate it. I told you I didn't take any interest in your bank account, Wilson; it isn't mine. I guess it was my last check, too!"

For one dead second the parchment-finished man was silent. He made a step nearer Scholl.

"I wouldn't fool! Where is it? If you tore it up there's no good trying to hide the bits round your bed. Spit them out!"

"I've spit!" Scholl's skinny finger pointed to the chewed and bloody fragments of blue paper beside his bed that Calthrop had barely noticed. "That's them! What did you think I'd do? Hand you all I had and ask you to send out for another sucker like me to sell the yacht to?"

The secretary started. It was a week since the yacht had totally ceased to appeal to him as a possession, but a second Jabez Scholl hanging about to buy expensive toys had not been forthcoming. Once more he was silent. Jabez Scholl in the bed was unwisely courageous.

"I don't know what you're fussing about anyhow," he observed. "There must be plenty of American checks like mine round. All you have to do is to borrow one and run the signing yourself. I'm done!"

"Yes," said the secretary slowly. "Where's the other money? I'd answer carefully, Jabez; I'm giving you your last chance!"

JABEZ SCHOLL might have known it; or perhaps he realized Wilson's face and that Calthrop might be late out of the cupboard besides being only one to two. He took off his blue spectacles with the straight nose bar, end-for-ended them with the exact characteristic and imitated action that had killed Calthrop's luck at the Casino, and the eyes they had hidden fired, then were suddenly and cloudily glazed. His hand described a shaky arc in the air as he put his spectacles back.

"I've no money I could draw one cent of this minute, short of America," he said. "That's my last." His voice went as suddenly cloudy as his eyes. "I don't care what you do, or Strachey either. I'm too tired. Nobody knows how tired I am. I don't care—I—"

His lips went on moving but his words stopped. He sank together on his pillows, a bony heap.

The secretary flung out a furious hand, and the bearded man caught it short. He eyed Jabez Scholl curiously, and spoke for the first time.

"Wait! It's no good your way!" He moved to the side table, poured something into the cup Mr. Calthrop had fortunately returned, added something else, and held it to Scholl's lips.

Calthrop's dose of soup had been wholesomely inadequate. Through the crack of the cupboard door he had an instantaneous close-up of the doctor's cup, half soup, half red wine, odorous under pinched nostrils. If Scholl drank, and gave in—

But Scholl did no drinking; Calthrop's slued eyes could see his face. There was not one sign on it to show what the scent of that full cup meant to his still ravening stomach. His slack hands on the bed lay slack still. Yet his mind might have clinched in him. He let the soup run from the corners of his mouth.

"Give him a jab of something!" Wilson's parchment-finished face was gray; there had been mistakes with Scholl's double; there was no sense in risking any more of Monte Carlo; no one had so much as nibbled for the yacht—she had either to be put out of commission or coaled to sail, and unless Scholl spoke he had no money for either. "He's got to come through!"

"I'm through now," said Jabez Scholl in a queer strung-together gasping whisper, and quietly fainted.

"I'd say he was." The bearded man observed him calmly. "You won't do anything with him now, Wilson; I know that kind. You can read about them—Hallam's 'Middle Ages.' 'Last impression on the starved brain,' paragraph generally begins; and ends, '—died mute.' I warned you last week. And I'd say the question—now—was us! What becomes of *us?*"

The secretary stood in silence for so long that the illicit tenant of the cupboard stopped breathing. But Wilson never looked at the cupboard. He looked at Jabez Scholl's face, as though he made an inventory.

"We?" he returned slowly. "We're through; too; pocket the loss; finish up. We'll take him away." Mr. Calthrop waited for him to reach into the cupboard for Scholl's clothes, but he did not look at the cupboard. "See, Strachey?"

"M-m," the bearded man nodded doubtfully. "I'd finish here, myself! I have the padrona scared; anyhow, she isn't likely to talk; and Daniels can't!"

"Yes," said the secretary flippantly, and turned on him, not flippant. "Talk sense! The woman here may be all right; I don't know! That was your business, unless you've made a mess of it like Daniels made a mess of himself with damn carelessness and a street-car. I don't do any murder—get that! And you don't do any tricks with Scholl tonight—get that, too! You don't know how far you can scare that woman not to look out for herself, and I'm not doing any dead-body stunt for her to drop on; but I'm not having any Jabez coming round and talking to her, either. You dress him in the morning—" He checked at something in the other man's face. "Mean to say he won't last on us?"

"Oh, he'll last: that faint's wind; his heart's all right. I only don't see—"

"You see we've got the car!" The secretary's eyes leaped like live devils on fire. "I'll bring her up early, about seven; and first good place on any of these mountain roads'll do, that he can't climb up out of—and I bet he'll speak before he goes down! Somebody'll find what's left of him and can't talk; somebody else may find out he's Scholl, wandered away somehow when he was drunk—we've had plenty to make that damn plausible—but we're not in it. We're gone—in the car!"

"Why not go now? Good clear night."

"Engine"—dryly. "Didn't you hear me come? And do you suppose we're leaving Scholl's twin lying round Monte Carlo, drinking?"

"What are you going to do with him?"

"That's my job." The secretary's gaze flicked him insolently. "Yours is dressing the old man and scaring the woman here till she'll keep her mouth shut. They can fix the car tonight—garage is close by the port—and seven'll see me here. We take a stroll, and disappear; I've kept a get-away fixed all along. They can find Jabez or not find him—anyway, it'll be a week before the yacht skipper begins to fuss—and we'll see it in the papers. That plain?"

THE bearded man nodded. Scholl, on the bed, came to, gray and sweating. Neither man looked at him. Both of them turned and went out. Calthrop had an impression that one of them tried the baize door and found it bolted, but he might have been wrong. Outside in the hall the doctor yawned and said he was going to bed. The secretary ran down the stone stairs to the front door without answering. In the silent cupboard Mr. Calthrop swore with mute incredulity. It was all easy: dead, screaming easy! There need be no rousing Francine and taking chances on her being in the thing. Scholl's captors had handed it to him—on a tray! Yet Mr. Calthrop did no emerging from the cupboard. He waited. Jabez Scholl got rid of his wind and the last remnant of his faintness, and he waited still. What he half expected happened. The bearded man came back, stood in the doorway, glanced at the gasping Scholl; and what Mr. Calthrop did not at all expect happened.

"If I hadn't believed you'd chucked that money overboard, Jabez, I wouldn't have gone so easy on you all this time," the bearded man observed thoughtfully. "But I was as stupid as that, till right now—when you took off your spectacles and I told Wilson it was no good—after I'd had a good look at your eyes! I guess you and I'll have a little séance in a minute, all to ourselves; and when you've coughed up where you deposited that money Wilson can have what's left of you to dress and pack up in that car! I'm getting off, here, when I'm through with you!" He turned in the doorway and banged the door on Scholl and Scholl's room.

Mr. Calthrop came instantly out of the cupboard.

"You keep still." He bent over the bed and the elderly agony of terror in it. "Hear me? Still! I'll take a look-in on that séance! Tell me: how many are there in this thing, besides the two up here and the man at the Casino?"

"Servant here." It was a gibber like a monkey's. "Land knows where he is! He's the worst."

"Who's Daniels?"

"Him."

"That's good." Mr. Calthrop smiled. "He's dead; got run over by a tram today. Leaves only three for us not to keep a date with. Now you shut up!"

Slowly, without sound, he set the door on the red-tiled hall open as it might have swung if the hasp had not caught when it banged. His two hands hung down in front of him and in them—grasped peculiarly—were Mr. Scholl's stout striped trousers and stouter braces. There was no one in the hall. The mirror room was empty. The doctor's room, if he were a doctor—

THROUGH the half-open door it looked very light inside. The bearded man stood with his back turned, bent over a table with a few trifling things on it, very like the things women used to use for poker work. One of them was a steel point, another was a spirit lamp. He was whistling softly, and he was absorbed.

Mr. Calthrop joined him, cat-footed and cat-quick, as also did Scholl's braces and trousers. When he came out it was without the latter articles and breathing a notch higher than usual. Sticking out of his pocket was a short black revolver he had thoughtfully retrieved from the bearded man's bag. He considered momentarily the baize door into Francine's, and it might have been well if he had tried it. He did not. In the empty hall he grinned; returned to Scholl's room and closed the door on the two of them as softly as he had opened it.

"That's all right," he assured the gray face against the pillows. "He won't worry you; off the list—can't vote. Other two are coming to take you off in a car tomorrow morning and chuck you down a cliff somewhere." Scholl's terrified mouth jerked wide. "Shut up! I'll take you off first, of course. All you've to do now is to wait till I go down and get a car; nobody can touch you. It's two now; I'll be back by four. And we'll leave this by the cupboard door. What's that?"

The gasp Scholl emitted was savage. "Gimme back that cup—er—soup! D'ye swear he can't get at me?"

"H'm!" Mr. Calthrop nodded curtly, and put the rejected cup of soup into the avid hands. "You keep calm now and wait for me to come back. We're all through but the cheering." He disappeared through the papered-over door and shut it behind him. Close-fitting, it shut fast and stayed fast.

Calthrop's six-by-six bedroom was dark as he had left it. He fumbled for his matches, knocked them skidding from a too quick hand into the dark under the bed, swore mutely, found the kitchen door and stepped through the doorway to the table where he had written his letter to that girl. There was a curious dull sound somewhere that might have been a bit of furniture shoved against the papered-over door, and his dog jumped to meet him. Jabez Scholl thought so, listening to the following calm and fortified with soup against suspense.

Mr. Calthrop thought nothing at all. As he stooped forward in the black dark of the kitchen his lowered head met something that might also have been considered furniture, if it had not hit him stunningly on the dark hair over his forehead. He made no sound as he fell, nor any fight. He merely clutched automatically at an impossible black satin cloak, very faintly scented, softly slippery.

His hand went slack as the checked machine ceased to register. The sawed-off black revolver he had collected from the bearded man slithered from his pocket. The girl he had danced with in the Café de Paris sank to her knee under his dead weight and eased him gently to the floor.

"LIGHT the light!" Her black cloak might well have been the last thing Calthrop had met, the girl had him in both arms. As she turned her head in the dark his cheek slid suddenly and lifelessly against her cheek. Her whisper jerked: "Light the *light!*"

The cinnamon dog leaped from somewhere with a faint sound of claws. A match flared blue, then yellow. The growing light of it centered on Francine cupping it in her hands; wavered to Mr. Calthrop, very long and informal on the floor and taking no interest in the proceedings; flickered on the cinnamon dog scrabbling at him and the dancing girl who had gone to Paris—and knelt now with one black satin arm under his head. Crusts took no notice of her. His upper lip clear of his teeth, he watched Francine, who had fed him with discards and patted him while she bade him guard her kitchen door. She held her match to a candle, apparently fortuitously;

she was not looking at it. As the wick caught she still held it. It was not till the candle-flame blistered her fingers that she snatched them away with a faint whine. The lower edge of her other hand had a cut on it, and the short-off neck of a broken water-bottle lay at her feet. She stared past it to the lumpy black revolver that had slid from Calthrop's pocket.

"I told you so," she said. "I did well to wait till his head was through this door!"

Rose-Rose said nothing. She looked at Calthrop, slipped her arms from under him, went into his bedroom and came back with a soaked towel. She was not a well-brought-up girl: she had seen worse blows and quieter men. She wiped the blood from his head, felt it expertly, and glanced at the rest of his water-bottle lying smashed on his bed just inside his room door. The remnants had fallen there noiselessly, mercifully for the nerves of Jabez Scholl next door, and that it was lighter glass than it looked had been well for Mr. Calthrop; also that Crusts's joyful spring toward him through the dark kitchen had caught Francine behind the knees and spoiled her blow. The girl in the black cloak regarded him without anxiety, and left him to his dog. Beyond the wet towel on his head she had made no effort to revive him, being possibly in no hurry for his opening eyes. She went through his pockets meticulously; through the shabby bag on the bedroom floor. Whatever she found she made no attempt to look at. As she turned back to the kitchen her face was whiter than the face of the man at her feet; but then Calthrop had been a good while in Calabria and was pretty thoroughly tanned.

She paused and stared down at him.

He had fallen forward into the kitchen, lay there as she had eased him down, his stocking feet just clear of his own open door. Francine made a step forward to shut it; and checked. The cinnamon dog had not moved except to cease licking Calthrop's hand and turn his head toward her, but neither did Francine go on moving. The girl in the black cloak stretched back a contemptuous hand and very softly closed the bedroom door.

"There," she said, "that's all!" She dropped an old *Daily Mail* on the kitchen table, a folded wad of French money, a letter addressed to Mlle. Rose-Rose—place of abode lacking—and a bit of bank-paper, folded right side out, that looked like a check. If the letter were for her she made no move to open it. She stood, shut-lipped, over the lot.

FRANCINE stared at the table, sent the old newspaper and the money flying, and swooped on the folded paper.

"Banca Commerciale!" She flattened it on the table right side up under the candle-light. "A Naples bank! Bones of my heart, if he was one of them he was the head one! We have it!"

"Have what?"

"Everything! This—here!" Francine's two hands, the bloody one and the blistered, slapped down on the engraving on the slip of paper, the scriggly Italian writing there was so much of. "It is his bank-receipt—the old man's—where he put his money and would not tell them—what they would have tortured him to get the day I found them chaining him and they said they would kill me! And that!" The blistered hand lifted to point at the lumpy sawed-off revolver on the floor. "It is the very one that pig doctor had the day he and the servant held me till I swore I suspected nothing and that the old man just drank! What do you want for more that he was one of them? And I, a fool, took him in here to protect me from those others, kept him for almost nothing because I trusted his handsome face and thought he was your friend—a man you had seen just once! Oh, he was clever with his dog and his easy ways! If I had not remembered I had forgotten to bolt the baize door after he told me the old man was groaning again, I would never have crept down in the dark to see what I did, nor had sense to run to you: I would have stayed here and been killed!"

"Hold your tongue," said the girl bleakly. "I don't know anything about the man. I told you I didn't; but I sent him. What do you mean about this?"

She nodded down at the Naples bank-receipt for the unreadable number of lire, but she did not touch it.

"I told you, the money—where the money is that they had the old gentleman chained up to get! They tried everything to make him tell where it was; they starved him to make him give it up; and this"—she wheeled venomously on Calthrop, who was still very quiet on the floor—"this had it all the time! You had the story. I caught him standing in their hall tonight when he went in to join the others; he was still with them when we came back, when they said there was the woman—they would scare the woman and finish the old man elsewhere; you heard them try the baize door after, on our very heels. And then he comes—by the other door I was not to know he had cut open! You saw!"

"Yes, I saw. I don't see—what you mean to do next!"

Francine stared as if she were giddy.

"Next? Run! Go—now, before they kill us! There is only him out of it; there are still the others. We have this receipt to take to the police and save the old man; but if we stay here we ourselves— Come! Come now; I am afraid!"

"AFRAID!" The girl was shorter than Francine, yet she towered over her. "Do you mean you only hit him because you were afraid? I always knew fear was the only devil in the world, but you—you're *all* fear! Pig-headed! I told you to wait when I was fool enough to let you come back here with me, and instead you had to— If I'd known what you were going to do I'd have let you be murdered before you—" She checked, caught herself together absolutely immobile, poised as though she were dancing, her controlled gaze on Calthrop, dead-quiet on the floor. She might not have known before that he was so tall, or so young; and the cinnamon dog licking his hand with frantic steadiness looked small and inadequate; also there had been trifling things at the Café de Paris like plenty of butter, his manner, his eyes. She swung round on Francine. "He had nothing to do with your brutes in the front of the house: not if he cut open all your doors and came in here with ten guns! What would he be with them *for?*"

Francine shrugged a sullen shoulder at the deposit receipt.

"That: as they were! He had no money; he was glad to lodge here for what did not pay for his sheets. And this!" She pointed at the wad of French notes on the table. "He had none of it yesterday. If he is not one of the front of the house where did he get it?"

"He won it at the Casino!" Not that the girl in the black cloak knew it; she was merely sure. Her dead-white face went lambent, like flame. "He had nothing to do with the front of the house. If he'd come in here with your starved old man's body under his arm I would not believe he had! As for the rest—" She had not glanced at her own letter, it would be only her thousand francs returned. She tore it open now, stared at it, at the thick enclosure—and caught it against her rather oddly before she laid it down. "Give me that bank-slip!" She flipped it from Francine with her controlled pounce, and turned it over. "How do you know it is the old man's? Or—"

She stopped, gazed at the back of the receipt as Calthrop had gazed in the red-tiled hall; at the front; the illegible name; snatched over the old *Daily Mail* and stared at a name there, at two snapshots—

"Ah!" she said, and then again, "Ah! So that's how he knew!" She pointed to Calthrop. "Did he say anything about the front of the house? Had he the dog with him, when you saw him in the front hall?"

Francine nodded defiantly. "He told me some lie about a rat squeaking after he said the old gentleman groaned. Yes, he had the dog!"

The girl shoved under Francine's nose the ten English words written on the back of the Italian bank-receipt.

"You with the dog, quick. Help. It's worth your while," she translated fiercely. "Do you know what you've done with your fool's fright? You've killed the old man! He sent for him—somehow, I don't know how; he was helping him!" Once more she was not a well-brought-up girl—she swore. "And you've ruined them both. Come!"

She had Francine by the arm, out of the kitchen, unbolting the baize door. The woman jibbed and she shook her.

"No one will kill you! Look!" Francine had not even seen her stoop but the sawed-off revolver showed black in her free hand in the faint blade of light through the opening crack of the baize door. "Take your shoes off; step when I step; hold your tongue!"

Easily, as in the Café de Paris, she stood on the red-tiled floor of the front hall that ran away from her to the stairs and the front door; her small, careless-looking left hand had Francine's arm in a queer funny-bone hold, impossible to slip. There was still no light in the red-tiled hall but the oblong blotches of the three doorways, and it was still empty. It was also deadly still. The mirror room was empty. Something in the look of it and the glooming mirror reflecting its emptiness turned Francine colder than her fear, cold past shivering; yet there was nothing there but the sparse furniture that printed itself unreasonably on her mind. The doctor's door was only half open, the light of his lamp very bright, very concentrated through the narrowed oblong. Only that cruel grip on her funny-bone kept Francine from sinking dizzily to her knees. Before it could tighten unbearably something else stiffened her beside the girl in the doorway. The bearded man lay on the floor, very adequately gagged and masked with Jabez Scholl's trousers and braces and tied into a spasmodically convulsed bundle with the sheets from his own bed.

Francine regarded him with stunned relief; the girl in the doorway was merely thoughtful, her somewhat sophisticated gaze dwelling oddly on the knots round his working wrists. It might be well, presently, when she had attended to something that sawed at her heart, to come back. But now she said nothing. She opened wide her eyes at Francine, and Francine quailed. Then she backed away as noiselessly as she had come. There was only the old gentleman's room left; and the old gentleman's room was quieter still. Jabez Scholl was soundly and incredibly asleep as he had never slept before in Francine's house. The green-shaded candle by his bed made dull pools of a pair of blue spectacles discarded and dropped where, with utter foolhardy relief, he was curled up luxuriously with the bedclothes wrapped round his old feet and a cut chain left visible like a dead snake across the bare undersheet at the foot of his bed.

Francine made a queer croak in her throat and the pain in her arm stopped her. She was back inside the baize door before the grip slackened and she could rub her elbow.

"Bolt the door," said Rose-Rose furiously. "Now help me! You've seen; he was going to do something." She had never known Calthrop's name, but it was no time for names. "He was going to take the old man away somehow!"

Francine gibbered. "How?"

"How do I know? He can't do it now; you've ruined that, unless he speaks. Hot water, quick; and some brandy! He's only knocked out. I'll get him round. Rub his hands—hard—while the water heats!"

BUT Crusts was still attending personally to Calthrop's hands, and Francine, seeing him, stopped in her tracks; the cinnamon dog might be small but he had a quick slash. Whether he reasoned it out or not the quiet girl kneeling by Calthrop was another matter; the two of them, dog and girl, toiled over him with all that their instinct or experience knew, and it was not for long, uncounted time that the girl drew back. This was no knock-out, as she knew knockouts. Hot water and cold water, fanning and brandy, Crusts' steady licking of the cold hands were alike wasted on it. Mr. Calthrop lay as he had been eased down to lie; and there was something about his lips that— The terrified cinnamon dog looked at Rose-Rose as he had once looked at Calthrop, with agonized appeal.

Under her black satin cloak the girl's heart contracted. But it was not with fear; it was with plain fury and determination.

"You shan't die—you hear me!" she burst out at Calthrop. She shook him, hard, and the cinnamon dog let her; jerked her head round to Francine. "What's the time?"

"Five."

"When were they coming for him—the old man?"

"Seven."

"Two hours!" She might have thought of one man gagged on his floor and of another in bed, sleeping in foolish security because safety was so near to him, and the motorcar coming to take them both away; or she might only have thought of Calthrop. He had to come to. If he could not finish his work, thanks to Francine, he had to tell her how she was to finish it for him, what she was to do. She reached behind her with a fierce effortless swing from the pivot of her knees, found something she was afraid to use, and used it. The spitting blue flame and choking sulphur smoke rose from the bunch of common lucifer matches she struck and held under Calthrop's nose.

It was no good; she had known it would be no good; but yet—

She flung the matches on the floor, let them burn; and Calthrop, with her quick arm under his head, sneezed and sneezed.

"Right," said the girl, "all right! That's your dog trying to lick you. You lie still!" With her free hand she wiped his dazed face with a fresh cold towel. "Have a drink in a minute; it's all right!"

Mr. Calthrop said nothing. He was sick and he was cold; his dazed head was a dull pain striped with vicious shootings; but under all his confused processes was a slow, rising tide of sensible, dominant rage. He spoke, suddenly and with difficulty.

"What time is it?"

"Not late."

The lie was instant and quite steady, but for the first time Mr. Calthrop looked at the liar intelligently. It was the Café de Paris girl! His head—why, his head was certainly against a black satin shoulder, very faintly scented, softly slippery! And as he came through the papered-over door into the kitchen he had thought—

"What in hell possessed you?" said Mr. Calthrop. It was toneless, but Crusts's tail clamped down between his legs.

"That can wait." The girl might have expected that kind of voice; the shoulder under his head did not move. "I know what you've done. You tell me what to do next and I'll finish. Do you want the old man brought in here? I have that revolver you took, if you need it."

"Revolver?" Either he wondered if—and why—she could possibly have rallied to his side after she split his head or he had an unwelcome vision of the secretary back, the doctor untied, and a general mess of bad shooting and his night's work spoiled; but whichever it was, he sat up. He pushed away the black satin cloak with loathing, or the girl in it thought so. But anyhow he sat up and somehow kept on sitting. "Guns have nothing to do with it! Move, will you?" His head was splitting and his thoughts all loose ends, or he might not have said it under the circumstances: "I have to go down to Monte Carlo!"

"You can't!"

Unfortunately he saw her glance at the bloody lump that was his forehead. A spurt of subconscious rage jerked out of him.

"It's as easy as to come from Paris!"

"Perhaps, when the rack-and-pinion is running! At present there is no train down for some time."

Mr. Calthrop looked past her as though she were not there.

"Get me a drink; mostly water—some brandy." He jerked a hand at Francine, but as she came toward him with the glass he grabbed at something else; and was not in time. Crusts had taken off from his side at Francine's throat like a cinnamon devil. It was the girl in the black cloak who caught his collar and held him moaning and snarling, till suddenly he cuddled against her and licked her face, still glaring at Francine.

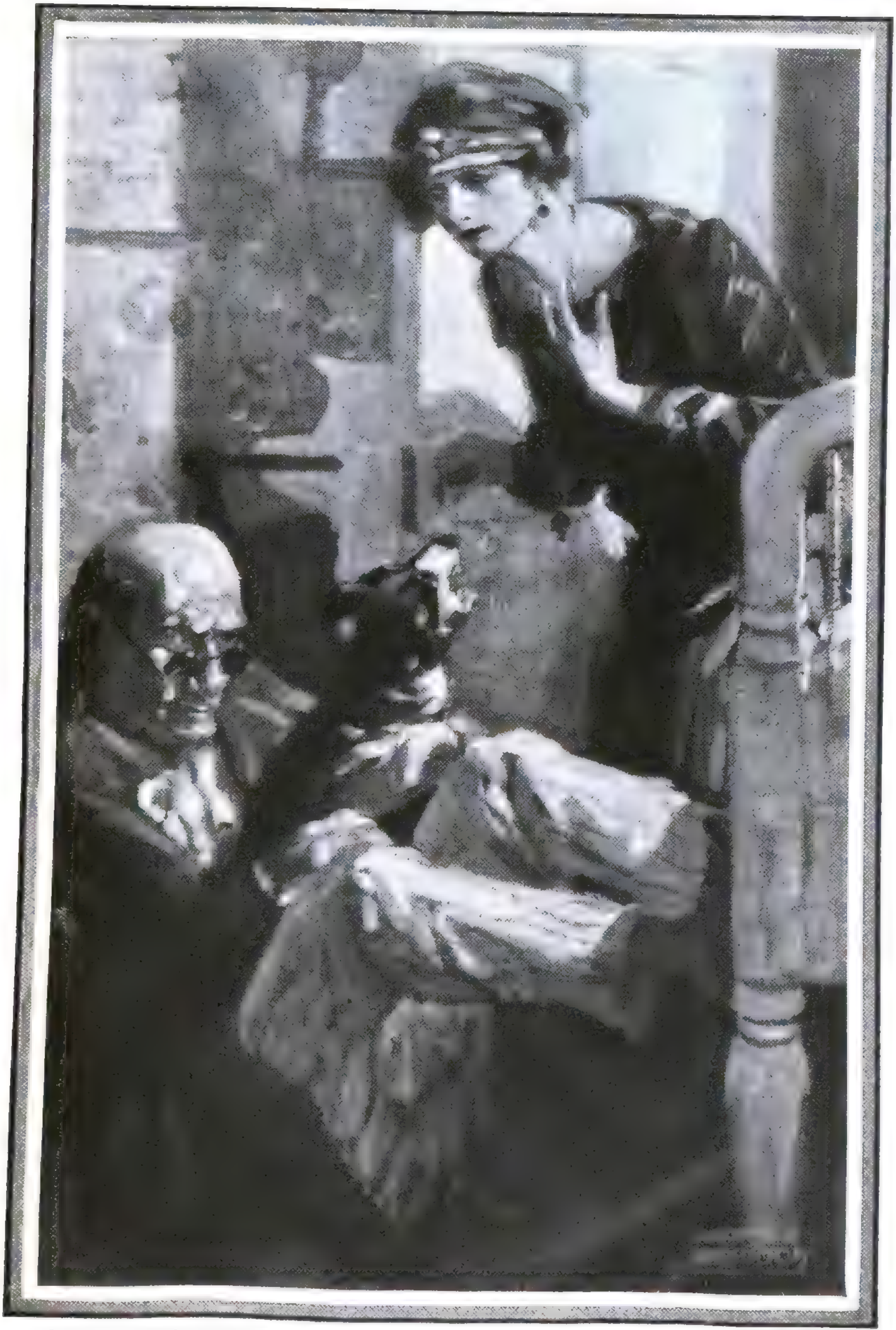
THROUGH the pain in his eyes Mr. Calthrop looked at the two of them.

"Oh!" said he softly. "Oh!" Suddenly, curiously, his rage left him. "So it was you, Francine," he observed slowly. "Would you mind telling me—why?"

Francine put down the glass that was mostly water and cried, helplessly and shamelessly, into her apron.

"She was afraid," said the girl quietly. "Call your dog, will you? Tell him it's all right. She took you in here first for protection, just not to be alone at night. She could not get rid of those men in the front of the house and she thought they would murder her because she had found out their game. She saw you in their hall tonight and thought you were one of them, so she ran down for me. One does not have the police here, to a respectable house, unless it is unavoidable, but she believed you would kill the old man—I mean help the others to do it—and then kill her. So I—I just came. It was all a mistake about your head, but I was not in time to stop it. Here is your drink; but keep still a minute while I bandage your forehead. What did you mean about going down to Monte Carlo?"

Mr. Calthrop made no answer. He waved away a bandage that had a strong family likeness to the hem of a Milanese chemise, looked at his watch, found his feet, and disappeared through the papered-over door. Jabez slept. At his other work he looked with satisfaction. Yet his head might not have cleared as much as he thought, or he would have looked again.



Inside the six-by-six bedroom, his back braced against the papered-over door, sat Jabez Scholl. He opened his mouth to yell.

There was nothing the matter with his knots, they were excellent knots: but a man who talked of séances might have little trouble with knots, given solitude and time. Mr. Calthrop was oblivious of it. He stumbled back to the kitchen and spoke to Francine.

"I'm going out for an hour. If you have the horrors again please go slow on them: everything is all right till I come. Don't touch a damn thing in the front of the house, and don't go near the dog!"

He shoved his feet into his shoes, and the girl behind him scrutinized him with a complete lack of ostentation.

"Your things are on the table," she observed carelessly. "I picked your pockets when I thought you meant to kill Francine. Your money, a receipt—I should say it was valuable." She handed them back to him with her own letter and its enclosure underneath. The old *Daily Mail* she forgot where it lay on the kitchen floor; and she forgot also a trifling detail she had meant to attend to, and that Calthrop had not noticed.

Mr. Calthrop might not have observed the letter he had painfully half addressed to her, nor made connection with the fact that it had been delivered and returned—open. He did see Jabez Scholl's bank receipt in her hand with his money. He took the lot from her, shoved them into a coat pocket, bade Crusts lie down, and felt his way down the dark service stair to the Street of the Ghetto. There he stopped. The girl he had left with Francine was on his heels. "Yes? What?" he asked impatiently.

"Me. I'm coming. Did you ever walk down to Monte Carlo? I thought not! You won't know the way!" It was unfortunate that she had come up to La Turbie herself with Francine in a chance car whose chauffeur had hours to wait for his master and saw an easily turned penny; even if she had dared ask him to wait he would not have done it. But she made no mention of any car, nor did she inquire why Calthrop was going down to Monte Carlo. She closed the door behind them, flashed a pocket torch on the Street of the Ghetto, and as abruptly shut it off. The sharp momentary light hurt Mr. Calthrop's head stingingly.

"You can't leave that madwoman alone." With no more reason than a dog's licking her face he spoke as if she were on his side. "It's not safe!"

"Walk beside me," was every earthly word she said.

THE short cut felt like successions of trodden earth, rough paving, irregular too-wide steps on the average angle of a house roof. Normally, Mr. Calthrop would have raced down it. Even now he could have made some kind of time if it had been daylight. But in the dark every step jarred his head, the torch the girl flashed on the turns cut his eyes. He stumbled, badly; and he kept on stumbling. The girl made her cat-quick pounce for his hand, lifted it to her shoulder, and he steadied. It was curious that his only thought was not gratitude, but, with a queer revulsion, of de Nevers-Outremont and the Hermitage Hotel. He hated her shoulder, but to his shame he dared not let it go. His feet were too light somehow, as if he were top-heavy. He made himself speak through the throbbing hammers in his head. "How d'ye know the way like this?"

"I lived up above nearly a year." She put an arm round his waist and fairly lifted him round a turn. "We're nearly down now. We haven't been long."

Mr. Calthrop would have shut his teeth furiously if it had not hurt him too much. Not long! When every minute counted and the steps and the slippery paving were keeping on interminably! Yet he knew that if he had been alone he would have been longer; he would have had to stop, steady himself against the stone wall at his side, wipe the queer hot moisture from his forehead. But the girl was doing no stopping, and suddenly, like a miracle, the pain in his head eased. The short cut had ceased; turned to a road, houses, streets, lights, the dull lights and empty streets and scavengers' carts of Monte Carlo in the gray dark of early morning. Somewhere close by a clock struck six. Mr. Calthrop stood galvanized; leaped forward, and ran—through the empty streets, over the smooth pavements, downhill. The girl moved easily at his side. She did not know where he was going, had not asked. If it were to the police it was unwise, but it was not her affair. Her affair was to see that he arrived wherever he was heading; and she had just time to jerk up standing, her black cloak flying wide of her like wings, except to one side where something weighted it down. He had stopped under the lamp-post at the cross street on the hill where the Mentone trams turn off toward the Casino. In the yellowish light the caked blood on his forehead that she had meant to bandage was edged with fresh scarlet. He pointed to his right to night-green grass and trees and the Hermitage Hotel.

"There's your hotel." He made a half-turn from her. "I'll be quite all right now; thanks very much."

"My hotel? The Hermitage?" She gaped in his hard eyes. "I do not know what you mean! I do not stay at *hôtels de luxe*. I'm living in the Condamine till I sail next week with Luigi's company. If you are going to the police, that is not your way!"

"Police? No, I don't want any police!" It was all but absent. There was no sense in that detached leap of his heart, it was none of his business where she lived; he ground himself down to what was his business. "I want this thing kept quiet! I'll fix it myself."

HIS voice might not have been so steady as he thought; he did not even wonder how they were suddenly hand in hand, running. She ran as she had danced, strong, floating, exquisitely easy, down the hill; round the corner with the dark graying a little more; smooth pavement under their feet.

The red light and the green light of the little circular port jumped out at Calthrop, and this time they were steady; the riding-light of Jabez Scholl's yacht shone pale. Mr. Calthrop's brain worked now, as quick as his feet. The garage—that garage the secretary said was close to the port—must be around the corner on the Nice road. He dared not take time to see if it were open and the parchment-finished man waiting for his car. All he thought of was Jabez Scholl also waiting, at La Turbie, and the hour he could never be back in unless—

Somewhere in the back of his brain rose a bit of knowledge the secretary might not possess. Seventeen minutes from the Condamine to the top of Mont Agel was the record for a car; ten minutes, with a dose of chloroform to lighten the gas, ought to do it to La Turbie and Jabez with a man who could carry the job; and— His mind jolted his head. At six in the morning there was not even a bare chance of finding the one man who could carry the job! He would be off for the night; or not on for the day; and there was no time to look for him! The girl slipped her hand out of his and he did not notice; he was beating the record along the flat Condamine road. The place he wanted had a light in it—but of course it had; that meant nothing! He came abreast of it, lifted unexpectant eyes, and the breath tore out of him in one long sobbing gasp. He slid through the door of a very white hotel into a very white office; the dark brown concierge behind the desk came to his feet like a rocket, and the swing door closed on them both.

She had no desire to go in. She had had time for one comprehensive glance before the blind fell. What she saw was the fresh and unbecoming blood the run down had encouraged on Calthrop's face; she might have missed something in the look of the dark brown concierge. Sudden wild terror—of what she best knew—made her heart jump. Francine, the pink house, a man tied up in sheets and an old man who slept, danced before her in terrible fragments round a man staggering in a very white office against a dark brown concierge. What he was doing for the moment did not matter; but for what he was going to do—

"Holy peace, he will be too late! Unless—" She set her small teeth. "If I can head him—if I'm quick—I've the key and the money!" But her hand stopped mechanically in the front of her dress. It felt the key; but there was nothing else to feel but a bit of folded paper, like a check. For one instant she rummaged for an opened envelope—and remembered. "Fool, fool, fool!" said she. "I gave him back the money! I've nothing out of the whole mess—but this!"

She fingered Jabez Scholl's bank receipt—and how she had it was her affair—pushed it down into her dress again, and melted into the graying street around the corner toward the garage where Jabez Scholl's secretary kept his car.

She did not go in, if she had meant to. She wheeled and ran like mad up the Condamine hill.

THERE is no hectic motor traffic out of Monte Carlo before seven o'clock on a January morning. The gray road to La Turbie lay solitary and deserted under a gray mist till a sudden grayer shape ground out on it, an ordinary military lorry for the fort above Mont Agel with a needfully powerful engine and something dimly suggestive of *corvée* lettered on its gray side. The load on it was chiefly beef, covered with somewhat time-worn canvas, and the man who drove it was no meticulous chauffeur. His last stop had been at the *estaminet* in Beau Soleil where he always stopped, and he was not cold in his fatigue dress nor was he even smoking. He was singing. He was also in a hurry, which he regretted. The bareheaded girl with the black bundle under her arm who had asked him for a lift as he came out of the *estaminet* had a voice like the silver string of a guitar.

Where he sat beside her in the bone-chilling morning air it did not enter into his usually astute consciousness that it was he who was the guitar, with the girl playing her own tune on it. She was possibly in no hurry herself, she never mentioned haste; she was just admiringly astounded at the speed of the lorry—which its conductor promptly increased till there was something to talk about. Through the roaring drone of his engine he attended to that personally. Only he could make that lorry walk. He was of the Thirteenth Alpini, headquarters at Mentone; he regretted he had not met Mademoiselle till he was nearly due to return there, and his name was Tardevon—Henri. He trusted Mademoiselle was not cold.

At which Mademoiselle unrolled her black bundle and wrapped it round her. She was cold. She was also praying, though the thought in her head was of murder; plain ugly murder and a scared woman practically alone in a pink house at La Turbie to say what she liked about it. Above both things she was straining her ears through the roar of the now thoroughly tested engine. She heard nothing. She also saw nothing on what windings of the dim road behind her she could screw her eyes round on, especially no headlights of a following car haloed in the gray mist. It grew lighter. The houses of the last village below La Turbie glistened white with the coming day on their night-damp fronts, were past, and she still heard nothing. And the bell for the quarter to seven mass somewhere rang out plain.

"The work I do up here begins at seven," said the girl rather breathlessly. "Could you—do you think I shall be in time?"

The ornament of the Thirteenth Alpini did not answer. She should see if she was in time! The lorry gave a world-shaking leap and swerve as he let in more gas and turned the tail of his eye on his passenger. She was too pale, of course, but she was satisfyingly beautiful; also as the jolt sent her flying against him he was suddenly aware that the black thing twisted round her shoulders was softly slippery and faintly fragrant of roses. Her work! He half smiled and half whistled as the lorry providentially retook the center of the road.

"You drive well," said the girl at his ear. "Any one else might—perhaps—have wasted the beef!" Her gaze leaped from the empty road before her to the hairpin turn—at last!—from La Turbie to Mont Agel. "And here—with every gratitude—is where I get down!"

The lorry groaned, jerked on the brakes, and stopped beside the hairpin turn. The man who drove it also jerked. A hand—the kind of hand he had never touched—slim, miracle-white, pink-nailed, had taken his; and a thing new and alien rose in him.

The girl was unaware of it. She ran, with small capable feet that never even felt the slippery stone of the Street of the Ghetto. Even now, if she had not had the key of the service door— But she had it; had taken it from Francine's jerking hand and never given it back again. She twisted it backward in the lock as La Turbie keys twist, and was in the pink house. And on the turn of the service stair knew she was too late for what she had forgotten.

SHE jumped forward and tackled Francine round the knees.

"Where are you going?" She shifted her hold as the widow Caussade sat down hard on the stone stair. "Don't scream; don't dare! Where are you going?"

Francine gasped and clung to her, like a drowning woman to a rope.

"He is out," she jabbered, "the pig doctor—out of his sheets! I went in, just to look at him. He all but had me—before I got the baize door bolted. And the old gentleman—is— Come away, come away, or he will kill us, too! Listen!"

There was no need. Round the turn of the stair above them some one was kicking at the other side of the baize door, from the front of the house. The only good thing about that was that under the baize it was an oak door and the bolt as kick-proof as the hinges. Francine Caussade was dead to those facts. She tore away down the stair and beat at the street door with her hands. The girl let her. There was no inside latch, and for reasons of her own she had left the key on the outside of the door. Besides which, it was not Francine she had come for.

"The old man! Dear life, the old man!" What she thought was that somewhere behind doors the cinnamon dog was barking. She fled up the stair into the kitchen, past the banging on the baize door to the six-by-six bedroom and the papered-over door that was all that separated her from the defenseless old man Calthrop had left asleep. If that bearded devil had killed him or got him away her night's work was ruined; except for that deposit receipt in the front of her dress! Not being accustomed to rage she did not know she was sick with it. She tore open the door of Calthrop's room and heard the cinnamon dog stop barking, saw— She stood still.

INSIDE the six-by-six bedroom, that one mercifully secret corner in the widow Caussade's house, sat Jabez Scholl. He sat on the floor in his red flannel dressing-gown, his ugly old legs stiff against Calthrop's bed, his back braced against the papered-over door. His blue spectacles were crooked on his anguished face in the cold dusk of the green-shuttered window. In his arms was the cinnamon dog. He said nothing. He merely opened his terrified mouth to yell.

The girl would also have said nothing, if she had dared. But it was no time for the sudden voice of the escaped Jabez Scholl to reach the ears of the man trying to kick in the baize door to ransack the house for him.

"Still! Be still! The dog man's coming!" She nodded at the tense anguish on the floor. "Don't scream. I tell you you're safe!"

Suddenly she was aware that the pink house had gone dead-silent. The kicking on the baize door had stopped.

Either the bearded man had smelled the rathole of the escaped Jabez or the others were back with their car; in neither case was it likely that the frail rampart of an old man's back and a thin, papered-over door would last long. There was no sound. She dragged her squared mouth together, straight; ran her hand into her black satin cloak where something weighted it down; closed Calthrop's door on Jabez Scholl and the cinnamon dog; and unbolted the baize one into the front of the house.

The red-tiled hall was empty. So was the bearded man's room; except for a pair of trousers with braces and a sheet lying abandoned on the floor in the smoky glow of a burned-out lamp. The bearded man himself was in Jabez Scholl's late bedroom with his heavy back to her, half in and half out of the groove-and-tongue cupboard. The girl opened her mouth very wide on one side only.

"*Hrr-rrrl!*" It was not a scream; it was merely a very successful and ear-splitting imitation of the whistling screech of a shell out of space. If it were meant to make the bearded man leap backward it worked. He stared at a slight, black-cloaked girl, and into his own sawed-off gun. The girl called into the hall behind her: "Quick! I have him, messieurs!" And he still stared. She was only a girl and light-built; she had not fired at him; all he had to do was to jump for her and his gun. Only he did not do it. He wheeled, ducked, and ran past her into the red-tiled hall. He shot past his room, grabbed up an indistinguishable black object like a bag at the stair head, and took the stairs to the front door on the fly—out into the open square of desolation and cobblestones and sparse grass. Nor did he pause there. He glanced to his left and vanished, with two minutes to spare.

It was a low car, long, white. It came out of the morning mist with three men in it and cleared by one-half inch the near hind wheel of the lorry at the turn of the Mont Agel road, where the man on fatigue duty still sat occupied with agreeable curiosity and the hind quarter of his cigarette. The wind of its speed hit him in the eyes, as did something else. It shot past him and stopped—out of sight, all but a half-section of one rear wheel—at the exact spot where a girl had vanished into a dark passage.

"Mademoiselle's work!" her late chauffeur whistled. "I should say it might be interrupted!"

If it had not been for the fort beef he would have gone to see, but he dared not abandon the beef. He swung himself around to a precarious perch on it, his face to where the girl had disappeared and his legs dangling over the side of his lorry to wait for what might come next. It was not long coming. The white car backed into full sight and shot back again, slipping past him this time with no effect of haste and a full view of a ducal coronet on its door, a chauffeur to match, and a dark brown person in nondescript clothes. The third man had apparently stayed behind somewhere: but for a lump of rugs on the tonneau floor the rest of the car was empty. It proceeded down the road to Monte Carlo with lordly ease, but there was no sign of the girl.

The latter fact might have been natural. She and a man with a borrowed cap crammed down on a forehead that was still in want of bandaging stood face to face in the red-tiled hall of the pink house with a cinnamon dog wagging its tail at them and the widow Caussade, very pale, at the baize door behind them. Both were a trifle flushed, as from recent hasty exertion. The hard core in Mr. Calthrop's eyes was remarkably plain.

"What possessed you to come back?" he blazed at the lady he had left in Monte Carlo. "It was absolutely mad. Why did you come?"

"Oh, I just came." There was no necessity to say that having no money in her pocket she had remembered the daily fort lorry and run for it. "I was afraid. I see now it was not necessary; you would have been in time."

"Time! The man might have killed you first, if you call that time. How did he get by you? You had the gun!"

"Are you angry?"

Mr. Calthrop regarded her.

"Heavens, no! I didn't require him." It was one incubus got rid of so long as the bearded man had gone far enough. "All I want is no fuss and no talk. But I still don't see why you didn't have to plug him!"

"Plug? Oh, the pistol!" she laughed, a good easy chuckle. "I couldn't. I'm not old enough to have been in the war, I didn't know how to shoot it. All I know is dancing."

Mr. Calthrop was past speech. He glanced down the stairs to the closed front door, at the bearded man's bedroom, vacant now of Jabez Scholl's trousers and braces, and at Mr. Scholl's own late apartment, whose only salient features seemed to be a row of empty dishes on a side table and a cut chain lying on a half-stripped bed; and found his voice in all he dared say.

"Well, that's about all in bluff, for this morning! Come on out of this!"

Mademoiselle Rose-Rose nodded. As the baize door swung to behind them she swooped into the kitchen and emerged with an open flask of wine and some sticks of bread.

"One feels you do not consider it wise to stay to breakfast, but I eat or die," she observed, with a street boy's grin.

Mr. Calthrop did not supply the other half; he merely nodded. He, the girl, the cinnamon dog and the widow Caussade—the latter in haste and turning the tail of a terrified eye behind her—retired by the service door and the Street of the Ghetto into space.

IT WAS at that exact moment that Tardevon—Henri—and a quarter of Mont Agel beef described an incredibly swift and unpleasant parabola to the Mont Agel road at a sudden impact on the back of their lorry. It had been hit by a second car coming up. He staggered to his feet to see a slight parchment-faced man in brown clothes, backing it clear of his near hind wheel and cursing; but before he could also curse it was gone—where, he was uncertain, except that it was along the open main road and off somewhere to the left. He did not pursue it. He regarded the quarter of beef on the hairpin turn, the burst canvas from which was sliding more beef to join it in the dust. He ran along the La Turbie street to the first café, where the La Turbie gendarmerie takes the morning air.

Jabez Scholl's secretary, having barely noticed him, promptly forgot him. He was late, owing to the car and the nightman at the garage being a fool. It was broad pale daylight and his watch at twenty minutes past seven as he maneuvered his car through back lanes and squawking hens to an empty square of desolation and the front door of the pink house. Beside him sat the man who had spoiled Calthrop's luck at the Casino, an exact replica of blue spectacles, wrinkles, and Mr. Scholl when normal and clean-shaved. He said nothing as the car stopped and the parchment-finished man quickly jumped to the grass-grown cobbles. He was nervous, and with more reason than perhaps occurred to him, the secretary having no idea of his future movements being kept tab on by any kind of Jabez, real or otherwise, as he disappeared wordlessly into the front door of the pink house and left it open behind him.

There passed a cold, silent minute. Jabez Scholl's twin shivered suddenly in the unsunned square and the secretary shouted simultaneously from the stair-head inside the open door: "Scholl!"

Whether it were addressed to him or not, the near-Jabez answered. He got out of the car automatically and went into the pink house; leaving the car empty and the engine running.

He was gone what might have been ten minutes. On the near edge of the second minute two cracks in the tumble-down wall corner of the alleyway that debouches into the square from the Street of the Ghetto were blocked by the heads of a man with a cinnamon dog under his arm and a girl standing beside him. Both their faces were glued to the inch-wide apertures in the wall edge, and both ceased chewing lumps of bread.

The girl stared fascinated.

"The car! Aren't you? What do you do now?"

"Nothing." Mr. Calthrop also stared. "Outside me—let 'em go and be rid of them's all I want! Even if they go down to Monte Carlo they can't do anything. Old Scholl's no fool. Besides, the concierge has him locked in a hotel suite by now, and he'll wallow there till I go for him. Look here!"—suddenly. "Why did Francine say you'd gone to Paris?"

"I told her to"—blandly. "I was afraid you might wish to meet me and fuss about that café bill. How did you get M. de Nevers-Outremont's car to come up for your old man?"

Mr. Calthrop flushed, a rich and stinging red. So she did know de Nevers-Outremont, Hermitage or no Hermitage—besides telling Francine to lie!

"Oh, that! Accident—chauffeur's the concierge's brother, sleeps in the hotel. It would have been perfectly calm and businesslike if he had not made a vicious addition. And your friend de Nevers-Outremont's in Paris!"

"Yes." The girl nodded absently, staring through the wall crack at the empty square and the throbbing car. "He is not my friend. I just know him. But that was one reason I did not go back to Paris with Luigi. I—I do not tangle myself much with people."

MR. CALTHROP digested it. Abruptly and for one instant he removed his eyes from his own crack in the wall. "What are you in this thing for, then?"

"Oh, it was my affair! I sent you to Francine without knowing the mess greed and fright had got her into, and after she knocked a hole in your head—" She paused scornfully. "I don't see how men ever accomplish anything! Can't you see the thing for yourself? I forgot to tighten those sheets, but you never even thought of it! You were gone: a strange man Francine had knocked down in her house! If the man with the beard had killed the wretched Scholl after he wormed himself free all he would have required to say was that you had done it when you bound him—and prove it when the police found that bank receipt on you. There would only have been my word against that *pièce d'accusation*—and I should probably have been gone to America!"

"Francine—"

"Would say anything she was terrified into without me behind her, as you know. Once I was in the thing I had to remain in it. You had left everything arranged—admirably—to clear every one in the house but yourself! So I returned in the fort lorry when you left me for your concierge. I was a fool, of course: the old man had hidden in time, and the other thing—could not have happened in any case. Here!" She slipped something into his hand. "You have never even missed it! I took it out of your pocket when I put my arm round you going down to Monte Carlo."

Calthrop glanced down on Jabez Scholl's fabulous bank receipt and back at the empty throbbing car; he dared not look at the girl. He spoke in a curious voice. "Oh, *Rose-Rose!* But you! Why, you—"

"No." She shrugged one shoulder. "I should not have got into trouble: I should have used it in other ways for you if necessary. Who told you Rose-Rose was my name?"

"Francine. Isn't it?"

"It was in the cabaret where I was brought up. I have another somewhere. If that were my receipt I should put it away safely, at once." Suddenly: "Those men are very long inside! Suppose they come round on us through the house?"

Mr. Calthrop shook his head. He could trust Francine for warning of that at least, where she trembled at the other end of the alley. He had not thanked the girl—Jabez Scholl's deposit receipt disappeared into his inside vest pocket; he did not know how he was ever to thank her, for that and all the rest. He reddened with the raw masculine shame that hurts; but some of it he could get rid of. His hand plunged into his coat pocket; he shoved an opened envelope with Rose-Rose on it at her, blindly.

"You didn't put away your own money when you had it," he retorted. "Thousand francs and half winnings! I can pay it back now."

"I've nothing to do with any winnings," said the dancing girl calmly. "And as for paying me back—I've no particular time to count out nine hundred and ninety francs now! I owe you the other ten francs."

Light broke on Mr. Calthrop. "Oh—in the café! When you gave me the thousand!"

"H'm!" Her eyes were glued to the break in the wall and her hands clasped. "I had no small change. I am not really a scrupulous girl."

"Well, I am!" Mr. Calthrop's bitterness was beyond grammar. "And I can't stand it. Ten francs! Can't you see that whatever you take from me I can never pay you?"

"No-o?" said the girl very slowly. "Well, neither can Crusts pay you for saving him; and he and I owe you money at this minute. No, don't speak; listen! And put money out of it, if a man ever can. All my life nobody—not even the cabaret girls who brought me up—was ever kind to me with no questions asked and no object to gain till you were, that afternoon outside the Casino. Through you I had not to slink back to Paris; I had my chance with Luigi; and besides—" She caught herself together, poised, collected, but for something deep in her gray eyes. "Oh, I know you did it in the same way in which you fed crusts to a starving dog, but if he can be grateful so can I!"

"Not if I never see you again." His most intimate friend would not have known his voice. "Do you mean that?"

"I sail from Cherbourg next Tuesday," said Rose-Rose simply. "But seeing me again is—as you choose. It is naturally not my affair, my—my friend!"

THERE was probably no occasion for Calthrop's blood to plunge, yet it did. He never even glanced at Rose-Rose. His hand came down on her arm, gripped it. Opposite them, on the left of the square, the little triangle that leads out of it up to the church gave up a moving figure. Stolidly, yet treading softly, the bearded man emerged on the grass-grown cobbles beyond the waiting car.

Rose-Rose whirled on Calthrop.

"Oh, aren't you—"

"No! Let 'em all go!" He was abruptly silent where he and the girl were somehow standing hand in hand. It was she who spoke under her breath.

"Holy peace! The others!"

It was not that there was any sign of them; there was not. Inside the pink house at that minute the secretary came hurriedly up the stairs from the service door on the Street of the Ghetto. He had no desire to go out into it, nor even to look out. From Francine's attic roost to the larder there was not a pinhole in the pink house that he had not ransacked: and the result was more thoroughly nerve-destroying than even Mr. Calthrop's fondest anticipation. In the red-tiled hall he set his teeth deliberately to review for the last time the empty bed with the cut chain that had restrained his employer. The twisted sheet on the floor of the bearded man's room which had evidently been also restraining, and—from Calthrop's side of it—the slit-open, papered-over door. He also relinquished all thought of the woman of the house whom he had left Scholl's guardian to manage, and it was not because of a masculine and almost empty traveling bag sitting abandoned in the six-by-six bedroom. It was the mere back-number *Daily Mail* sprawled under the kitchen table, and a sickening stab of subconscious and apparently irrelevant connection between it and a low car—long, white, innocently empty but for the chauffeur and some kind of servant out of livery—which had gone down to Monte Carlo as he came up.

AS IT met and passed him within six inches he had not glanced at it further than to recognize de Nevers-Outremont's car; yet now there leaped before his eyes—salient, all but bodily—a clumsy lump of rugs on the tonneau floor that he did not know he had noticed. Under them, of course, safe and grinning, had been—but he did not finish. It was Mr. Calthrop's imaginary ally on whom his attention was concentrated. If the Duc de Nevers-Outremont had got hold of Jabez he had also spirited away the missing Strachey; how, the secretary did not pause to inquire, with that second door on the Street of the Ghetto practicable behind him. All that was lacking in his reconstruction of recent events—which was correct enough if he had totally eliminated de Nevers-Outremont, who would not have touched them with a pair of tongs—was the concrete physical emissary who had run the work in the pink house. He had no earthly desire to fall over him, now or later. What rose up before him was that under given circumstances Strachey would talk and that by now Jabez Scholl's tongue was hung in the middle. An icy lump he had erroneously supposed to be his stomach turned over. He said nothing about any car. He screwed his parchment-finished, broken-lined face round on Jabez Scholl's double.

"They've got Jabez—and they've got Strachey: for the third degree!" his voice cracked.

"Who has?" The double had lost all likeness to Jabez. He stood, a flat-faced, broken-down actor, and goggled.

A living devil leaped in the secretary. "I'm not waiting to know! I'm going. You can do what you like."

The near-Jabez yelped and sprang after him down the stair to the front door.

It was he who gasped in the empty square.

The secretary was utterly silent. The car was gone. Where to or who with was the last thing that occurred to him, or that there was no occasion to worry over Strachey's talking. Under the interested eyes of Mr. Calthrop and Mademoiselle Rose-Rose the bearded man had boarded the empty car, thrown in his clutch and departed at the exact psychological moment to be successfully out of sight and La Turbie and humming easily down the Great Corniche Road as his colleagues emerged from the pink house. Perhaps he, too, might have arranged a getaway all along; at all events he was leaving—thoroughly—the parchment-finished man and the rescuers of Jabez Scholl.

The secretary had no guess at it, or he might have been even relieved. He stared at the grass-grown cobbles of the empty square with growing, calculating fury. There was an eminently quiet feeling about that square; too quiet, added to a vanished car. The pink house behind him made his back itch; it felt suddenly populous, full of eyes. Also he was aware of his wrist watch. Seven-thirty! There was no rack-and-pinion train down to Monte Carlo till eight-twenty-three. But he had no desire to go down. He wished to get swiftly out of the French territory he stood in, away from the principality of Monaco and over the Italian border, to Genoa and a tramp steamer for Valparaiso. He had no desire to tow Jabez's double; yet as his all-seeing, absent-looking eyes flicked the too empty square he dared not leave him.

"Come on," said the secretary fiercely. He glanced at a glaringly vacant alley to his right, passed it, and led the way out of the square through back lanes and squawking hens as he had come.

Mr. Calthrop, Mademoiselle Rose-Rose and a cinnamon dog emerged simultaneously through a Roman archway and the gloom of the Street of the Ghetto into the open sunlight and a world of glory. Francine abandoned scout duty and followed, blank with despair of the hopelessly offended Mademoiselle and the broken head of Monsieur; also one of her best water bottles was broken and it was she who would have to pay! But none of the three noticed her, except Crusts, who growled. She stopped forlornly behind the still closed kiosk where they sell the postcards. Mr. Calthrop set down the cinnamon dog and moved on, round the corner and a picket fence to the empty station of the little rack-and-pinion railway. Mademoiselle Rose-Rose accompanied him.

Crusts did not.

He yawned in the sunlit roadway; stretched all four of his legs one by one; admired their smooth working; and strolled out absently below the belvedere on what looks like a road and is merely trodden grass ceasing abruptly on the edge of space, fenced to the left by old wooden posts and rails and to the right by the triangular fragment of broken wall that juts from the foundation of the belvedere. In the middle is a gap like teeth with a bridge missing, over a gulf half slope, half precipice, with the nearest permanent landing some three hundred feet below. The cinnamon dog strolled, still absently, to the gap.

It was no novelty to him, being the beginning of the excitingly practicable thoroughfare round the belvedere to stray bones cast out from the grand hotel above and traveled by his capable feet every morning when Francine let him out; not from necessity but from pure collector's enthusiasm. He craned between the posts to it; decided he was not sure of the tail of Mr. Calthrop's probably disapproving eye; and sank down on the worn grass, scratching innocently.

Which was diplomacy wasted. Mr. Calthrop's attention was on scanning all roads out of La Turbie for the appearance of Scholl's late secretary. Mademoiselle Rose-Rose's was not. Her gray eyes dwelt suddenly on a deserted lorry at the turn of the Mont Agel road which had just been reloaded with dusty beef, and a soldier and a gendarme strolling away from it. She might have had no desire to meet her late chauffeur; she certainly started. Her thoughtful gaze turned abruptly to the sky above the belvedere, a sky of roses with a red sun melting to gold through them over the turquoise of the morning sea.

"La, la," said she, "the world is so beautiful! Look!" But as Mr. Calthrop nodded without enthusiasm she pulled him round with one small hand. "Just one half-minute," she said rather breathlessly. "We've time. Tell me, quickly, what do you do with your man when you observe him?"

"Look—see—where he goes!"

"You are letting him go?"

"What else?"—dryly. "He isn't anything I'd care to keep and all Scholl wants is to lose him. Besides—" He paused.

"I suppose so," Rose-Rose returned thoughtfully. "In daylight—it is best to avoid scandal. And in that case I think—I don't know— Flatten yourself here, round this corner! We will not be seen."

Mr. Calthrop looked at her. But he did not continue to look, nor did he flatten himself. He jumped to the angle of the station shed and stood there. The parchment-faced secretary was coming round the kiosk with a tourist's step and his arm hooked lightly through that of the man who had once looked like Jabez Scholl, and halting almost beside Francine.

If the widow Caussade would have leaped to join Mademoiselle Rose-Rose on the station her petrified legs did not move. Neither did she screech. She was silent. Mr. Calthrop was also silent, nor did he move. Mademoiselle Rose-Rose alone turned her head—she could not have said why—to the bare road behind the secretary and a soldier and a gendarme walking briskly up it.

THE secretary was unobservant of them, or her, or Calthrop, and he took no notice of Francine. He merely glanced at the trodden grass below the belvedere that looked like an open road. Mademoiselle Rose-Rose had been right about the view.

The pink house and his vanished car rose up bodily before the secretary; without reason, if something else had not risen too. It had not been all whole cloth about a dancing girl and a duke: he had seen her dine at the Hermitage with de Nevers-Outremont anyhow, if he left out also with Luigi; and this morning it had been de Nevers-Outremont's car! In the pregnant instant he neither observed the face of creation nor registered it, nor was he using his ears. He stood, for one incompetent minute, a sharp-cut, brown-clad silhouette against the morning sky.

"What in the devil?" said Calthrop.

Mademoiselle Rose-Rose had no idea, but she pounced at Calthrop's arm.

"Keep out of it!" she cried fiercely. And Jabez Scholl's late secretary turned.

The situation jumped on him alone, concrete.

There was no way to make the Roquebrune road. The lorry he had run into that morning still stood on the hairpin turn to Mont Agel and the lorry's driver was coming up on his rear. There was nothing sensational about his advent, he merely came; and behind him loped the La Turbie gendarmerie; under one cap, but stocky. To his right was Calthrop, altogether too quiet; to the left the woman from the pink house, galvanized, stepping forward. His eyes went front, to a cinnamon dog standing on the worn grass below the belvedere, before a gap in the ancient posts that fenced it in, and the cinnamon dog turned its head.

"CRUSTS!" roared Mr. Calthrop, and flung himself at the station fence.

He was not in time. The pounding arrival of a soldier and a gendarme had but one meaning in Crusts' bitter diplomatic experience. He clamped down his tail and hurled himself, through the gap between the posts, into space. The live devil leaped into the secretary's eyes. He disengaged himself sharply from Jabez Scholl's double; where a dog could go, he could. And he would probably have made it, but for a trifle. All the abandoned double took in was the gendarme. He struck at him, missed, and bounded forward. His colliding weight took the secretary fair in the gap between the posts, or Calthrop thought so. All he saw as he landed over the station fence was a pale gendarme, a disheveled soldier, and nothing—till the head of a cinnamon dog craned cautiously round the broken three-cornered wall below the belvedere. Calthrop seized his collar with one hand and the arriving Rose-Rose with the other.

"Come back," said he. "D'ye hear me? Don't look down!"

It was the gendarme who descended without haste to a certain point in the gorge below. The results of his investigation appeared in the press later as two men, unknown, without papers or passports. Henri Tardevon of the Thirteenth Alpini, completely sobered of the café brandy with which he had rashly reinforced the remnants of his *estaminet* wine, retired to his lorry and the fort without ostentation. It was doubtful if he even glanced at the girl.

WHICH was all. Except that on Mr. Calthrop's arrival in a retired suite of his original hotel in Monte Carlo Jabez Scholl received recent history and his wandering deposit receipt without speech, till suddenly he end-for-ended his spectacles and turned on Calthrop's cut head and the cinnamon dog.

"D'ye mean the two of them are dead—way they meant to put me? Not *Wilson.*"

"Stone."

"Well," said Mr. Scholl blankly, as at the incredible shattering of an omnipotent fetish, "I—I wouldn't have expected it of Wilson! I—I guess his funeral will go better, too, if I keep out of saying I knew him. And that's all about *him!* But I wouldn't be too certain on that doc. You might do some cabling in case there's any delay getting hold of this Bank Commercial money," he waved his fabulous receipt. "I'll put for America as soon as I get that damn yacht settled up—and I'll be glad to take you and the dog with me! Got any other job?"

"Job?" Calthrop stared. "No; but there's no occasion to— Anyway, it was only Crusts ran your show, and—great Mike, man; you don't know that I'm not another crook!"

"No, I drew lucky on that," Scholl returned composedly, but suddenly his sick worn face worked. "Cut it! D'ye suppose I don't know why I'm not attending my own funeral instead of staying home from Wilson's? If you don't like me you needn't sign on with me, but I want you and the dog to see me home first. Say, by the way, what's your name?"

Mr. Calthrop's hand was in his pocket on a girl's scribble of a steamer's name, and a date.

"Rose-Rose," he returned absently, and turned a rich bronze. "I mean it's Charles Calthrop. But I don't know that I can go with you, Mr. Scholl: I'm sailing by Cherbourg next Tuesday."

"I suppose you mean the girl is," said Scholl dryly. "Well, there don't seem to be any reason I can't, too. Especially as in that case I guess you'll require that job—after you and the dog have thought it out! Ring the bell, will you, and get yourself a drink; and when I'm rested you tell that girl I want to see her!"

THE END

# Ran Second

### *A Second Fiddle Plays the Solo Part in Another of Sam Carson's Red-Blooded Racetrack Stories*

### By Sam Carson

"GO GET him, Billy! Lay on the whip and run Eddie down!"

"Come on, Billy! Catch him, Eddie!"

Thus did the paddock gang lend discord to a sultry June afternoon at Churchill Downs. The fifth race was running, a handicap affair with Billy Dean and Eddie Craig fighting it out between them. And Eddie, leading jockey of the West, wasn't napping. Even if Billy Dean was an apprentice, he was about as clever a youngster as sat in the saddle. Eddie went for his whip.

"Neck and neck!" shouted Peg Daughtry, thrusting his sharp nose farther over the rail. "Neck and neck. Ride 'im, Billy!"

It was typical that Peg, like others about him, did not think of the two magnificent thoroughbreds waging such a gallant battle down the home stretch. But to these onlookers, part and parcel of the racing game, Gray Dawn and Hosea were too well matched to consider. Peg exulted in the hard-fought contest between the riders.

A growing roar and the racing field shot by, Hosea and Gray Dawn thundering on ahead, running like a harnessed team. "Shake him up!" Peg screamed. "Shake him up, Billy!"

After all, the paddock crowd was mistaken. It was the horses, in the last few strides, which counted the more. Billy felt Hosea falter, not much, but enough to lose at least a foot in his leap at the finish line. That foot meant that three placing judges obtained a view of Gray Dawn's head shooting beyond the twin steel uprights—first.

Down around the clubhouse turn the racing thoroughbreds swept. And then, at varying distances, riders pulled their mounts up for the canter back before the judges.

Billy Dean grinned delightedly at his erstwhile rival. "Gave you a tussle that time, Eddie," he called. "Old Hosea couldn't make that last jump."

There was an air of admiration and considerable respect in Billy's tone. He was measuring his ride by Eddie Craig's standards, and to Billy, that was nearly glory enough; he had given his ideal a gallant battle.

Eddie drew up alongside. "Wasn't your fault, Billy," he said. "Sure did get everything out of Hosea you could. You made a dandy ride."

In this manner the pair rode back to salute the stewards, Eddie complacent in victory, Billy pleased that he had won commendation.

And Peg Daughtry, still leaning over the rail, was likewise watching with shrewd eyes. "Eddie's gonna have a Tartar in Billy Dean," he mused. "Give the kid another year and he'll be a bearcat. Just a little more time, more experience in judging pace. Then watch out, Eddie. You're gonna fight to be the best rider in the West."

It seemed to Peg that these two brothers of the saddle would eventually become pals. Eddie was wise; he had learned his lesson fairly well. Money, which had been such a stranger to him in the struggling days of apprenticeship, was flowing in now; and a large proportion of it went into a banking account.

Billy Dean was climbing the ladder, two rungs at a time. With no one but his Aunt Harriet to look after, some owners, who were watching the young jockey's career, feared that he might join the all-too-large group whom ready money shoves into the borderland of dissipation. But somehow Billy was escaping this. Aunt Harriet was a seamstress, mild-mannered and blessed with a perfect understanding of her nephew's character. Hence Billy Dean was fortunate.

For two years Billy had shaped his calling, choosing Eddie Craig as the pattern. Eddie knew this; hence Peg Daughtry's presumption.

But there was a difference. Billy could lose his ingratiating grin at times. And his steel-gray eyes could become very hard. In addition he had a pair of fists that were as hard as hoofs. Furthermore, there was a girl.

SHE was Margaret Denny now, telephone operator in a downtown hotel. There had been a time when she was known as Maggie Denny—a time when Billy's fists had smacked more than one nose for the privilege of carrying her books from school. That was in the days when Michael Denny ran a dry-goods store in the southern section of Louisville. Michael's death had catapulted Margaret into the eternal fight for existence. He had left, in addition to his slim, blue-eyed daughter, a complaining wife who insisted upon an invalid's rights, and two little Dennys. And the store, as such makeshift operations go, was a total loss. It was root, hog, or die. Whereupon Margaret went to work.

The only thing between Billy and Margaret was the overhead cost. Margaret had it all figured out; there was Aunt Harriet, semi-dependent; Mrs. Denny and the two children. All in all, the girl realized it was too heavy a load for Billy's earnest young shoulders. Later—well, maybe. But not at present. She didn't want to injure his future.

Thus romance waited, quiescent, but not in the background, while Margaret operated switchboard plugs and cams, and Billy rode. True, there were times when Margaret wept, dry-eyed, of nights because of her burden. She wanted to wear fine clothes. She wanted leisure, to see shows, to—well, do what any other girl desires. But, to her credit, she didn't complain; instead she squared her capable shoulders and faced the world with a smile. That smile was Michael's sole legacy of any value and stood Margaret in good stead.

Billy was riding for James P. Blakely, whom turfmen knew as Big Jim. So was Eddie. But Billy was an apprentice, so he was farmed out frequently as in the Gray Dawn-Hosea race. Blakely, although he owned a considerable stable, rarely had more than one horse in ordinary races. Therefore he would let Billy have outside engagements.

All this is explanatory of subsequent events. It happened that this year the question of the best three-year-old horse was extremely muddled. No one thoroughbred had won a decisive victory. So, after weeks of discussion in the press, a special race was decided upon at Latonia track, to be run the first week of October, at a mile and quarter, the weights to be even.

Big Jim, owner of Luxor, believed he had the best three-year-old in America. And his Last Chance was nearly as good. Consequently, upon the announcement of the Special, the owner hastened to enter both horses. His decision was reached the afternoon of the race at Churchill Downs. So, late that afternoon, Big Jim sent for Eddie and Billy. And to them he confided his plans.

Seated in his room at the Watterson, the owner seemed to fill one side of it. Big Jim was massive; and he chewed perpetually at an unlighted cigar. "I'm going to stick with these horses myself," he announced. "Reckon I'm still as good a trainer as I ever was. Haven't made any definite plans on running this race, boys, except I'm figuring on winning the championship. Of course Eddie will ride Luxor. And you, Billy, will have the seat on Last Chance.

"And get this straight," he added, pounding the arm of his chair. "One of you boys is coming in first. I expect Eddie to be the one. I'm laying a bet with Kincaid. Figures his Twister is more than a sprinter. I'm laying him even money Luxor will finish in front. That's all, boys. No—wait a minute. I'm going to give you boys checks for five and three thousand, if you finish one-two in the Special. Think you can do it?"

Billy fingered his cap.

"For three thousand," he said, "I'd put Last Chance on my shoulders and try to come in first."

Big Jim Blakely chuckled in his deep, rumbling manner.

"Just ride as hard as you did today. That'll be plenty."

BILLY could hardly wait for the seventh race to be run. He had a mount in that event, and rode like a gentleman in a hurry. Quitting the scales on the trot, the jockey hastened to quarters and did a swift change to street clothes. With some fast moving he could double across the infield and meet a southbound street car. If he could make it by fifteen minutes of six, he could meet Margaret homeward-bound from the hotel.

Billy did it, with two minutes to spare. Wherefore he wasn't quite so breathless; yet he had some trouble in giving a coherent version of his employer's announcement. "Three thousand," he repeated. "Get that, Margaret? Three thousand! And five thousand if I get home first in the Special."

Margaret had a vague idea of what he was trying to tell her. But she craved details. Before they had walked the two blocks to her home, she had them.

"What I want to know," she said, "is why you're satisfied with trying to get second place. Is Mr. Blakely that certain Luxor will win?"

"You don't get the idea," Billy explained. "We're to be an entry. That's the way I got it. The boss is putting up a side bet on Luxor. And he's a grand colt. Naturally, if there's any chance, he wants Eddie to shove Luxor down the stretch first. But he wants me laying right up alongside—on Last Chance. He's for playing safe."

"H'm!" Margaret was thoughtful. "So you're willing enough to let Mr. Craig take the big end of that offer. If I was riding, I'd not let anybody get ahead cf me, if my horse was good enough."

"But Eddie," Billie insisted, "is an older head. And he's—he's the best rider in the country. Wish I knew what he did. He's entitled to first chance."

"And you—the Last Chance," Margaret added sweetly. "Listen to me, Billy. Don't let anybody get ahead of you. Maybe it's just my way of looking at things. I never did like playing second fiddle. But go ahead and do as you think best. I've got to hurry. The kids are hungry and I should have started supper ten minutes ago. Gee, but I'm tired!"

"You won't be tired," Billy said, "when I land that check. We'll be sitting on top of the world. . . . Can't I come back tonight?" Billy demanded as they reached the picket fence which straggled along the cinder pathway before Margaret's home. He looked appealingly at her.

Margaret shook her head. "You were here last night. And I'm behind on my work. There's a dress for Alice—and—I've got to fix a hat. Besides, Mamma doesn't feel so well."

"Tomorrow night then," Billy persisted.

"Yes—I think so. And now I've just got to go." Saying which, she kissed him, gave his cheek a soft caress. Billy couldn't help noticing the drooping lips and the drawn lines about her eyes. The sight of them caused his throat to tighten. "Margaret," he said huskily, "I've—just got to do something. Three thousand—"

She laughed softly. "Both of us have just got to do something. Well, I'll run for the kitchen. And you start, too. I'll bet your Aunt Harriet's got her supper in the oven."

Billy heard an uproar from within as she closed the door after one swift, smiling look backward. The children were demanding to be fed. And very likely Mrs. Denny was beginning to release her pent-up feelings.

"It's a darned shame!" Billy grumbled as he headed for home. "But what can a fellow do?"

What indeed? Billy was facing a problem older and wiser men than he had struggled with. He was a young man of brilliant expectation but little realization. He went home with a feeling of impotence, as if he were failing.

UNTIL the Kentucky summer meetings ended Billy made riding history. Once at Latonia he brought five winners home in a row. Racing followers began to court luck by betting on the rider instead of his mount. Fighting from barrier break to finish posts, Billy's grim face, his ready whip and reckless disregard were factors in any race, long or short, selling or purse. There wasn't any chance he wouldn't take. True, he was set down twice, five days each, for his methods. But at the same time the stewards felt regret; there wasn't any doubt in their minds that Billy Dean was in every race to win.

Then came a lull, the gap between meetings, when Big Jim Blakely assembled the cream of his string and journeyed eastward. With him went Eddie Craig and Billy; likewise Peg Daughtry. For that young gentleman, tout de luxe and worshiper of the thoroughbred, had had the forethought to attach himself to the Blakely stable. His long face and longer nose looked out of a box-car window as they departed from Latonia station. Peg's action was logical; he had realized Billy's star was in the ascendant. For a free-lance that was a wise move. It netted him some twelve hundred dollars before the first chill breeze came loafing out of the northwest. Also he had assumed the rôle of plunger, snapped his fingers at Blakely's trainer and was going strong just as Big Jim decided upon a week's invasion at Pimlico before returning to Latonia.

PEG had made a goodly portion of his money by playing handy man to one Andrew Levison, a dark-faced, tight-lipped person who bobbed up at various tracks. It happened that at Saratoga, Peg did Levison, whose specialty was making books for moneyed novices, an extremely handy favor. There was some information regarding a certain two-year-old, which Peg obtained—for a price. That information saved Levison money. It saved him so much that the bookmaker kept Peg on his list of friends.

Peg was high on that roster when the general movement southward began. Sporting writers began to discuss the Special at length, especially as the three-year-old rivalry centered upon Luxor and Twister with Last Chance, the second Blakely colt, and two other thoroughbreds mentioned as dangerous contenders. The fact that Luxor had won his last four races in an easy manner gave him a high ranking. But Kincaid, who owned Twister, had played the game shrewdly. Without appearing to, he had avoided meeting the Blakely colts and yet had won races that counted. The only factor which interfered was Twister's appearance in races of a mile and under. Only twice had the colt faced the barrier at more than a mile, both times to win decisively, but, it must be admitted, against an inferior field. What the Kincaid entry could do, with one hundred and twenty-six pounds, against Luxor or Last Chance at the same weights, remained to be proven.

Levison wanted to know very much; in fact that person had a very much higher opinion of Twister than of Luxor, which he considered the contender. But it is a bookmaker's business to play safe. Levison's clients put up real money. And there were entirely too many of them placing wagers rather early upon Blakely's two colts. This worried Levison, who, like his fellows, had made Twister the favorite over Luxor.

Now under ordinary circumstances it is to the advantage for the favorite to lose. Logically, the public makes the favorite, consequently betting heavily upon that particular choice. But again, bookmakers can beat the price of other thoroughbreds down, creating what might be termed a false favorite. Such concerted action can influence a certain class of betters effectually. Of course it is an obvious attempt at hedging—one of many, by the way.

In this case Levison had taken on some two hundred thousand dollars in early wagers, at four to one, that Luxor would not win the Special. And as the autumn meeting opened at Latonia, the bookmaker realized he had blundered. He found he could not pass his bets on, either. Nobody wanted them. Disquieting reports had begun to filter out regarding Luxor. He had worked out a mile and quarter in two minutes and six seconds three days after reaching Latonia.

It was a few hours after this that Levison went into action. And that brought Peg Daughtry back to the Blakely stables, hunting a job. Peg had been told that some rather accurate reporting, made daily, would net him one hundred dollars a week. All he had to do was to meet an unusually closemouthed individual, known as Henry the Egg, every night at eight o'clock and tell what he knew about Luxor. Naturally Peg took the assignment. It was easy to be taken on by Big Jim; Peg was unreliable, but honest in his work. And he had worked for the ponderous, good-natured owner many times.

Billy's first move upon setting foot on Kentucky soil was to go to the long-distance telephone. He followed that up by obtaining leave and visiting Louisville. He wanted to see Margaret; her letters hadn't been very cheering. And her voice, although revealing a certain gladness, had a new note, a rather tired one. And small wonder. Billy, upon his arrival at Louisville, discovered the following items:

One case of measles, a specialist's bill (the latter was Mrs. Denny's fault), and a matter of office politics at the hotel which threatened to separate Margaret from her employment. The measles belonged to Michael Denny, Jr. The trouble at the hotel had developed from a change in managers. So, all in all, Billy's visit was not the one he had anticipated. Trouble was in the air. And Margaret seemed aloof. She was rather complaisant in agreeing to whatever plans he suggested. Billy thought her too agreeable and there arose a slight misunderstanding. So he caught the night train, feeling somewhat depressed. Billy lacked diplomacy: and he needed practical experience.

PEG caught the young rider moping about the stable the next morning. Seeing the scowl which threatened to become permanent, Peg became inquisitive. His nose fairly twitched with curiosity. Something was wrong and he knew it.

"What's eating you, Billy?" he inquired, discarding his grooming outfit. "Lose your mount in the Special, for instance?"

Billy shook his head, continued to stare at the sawdust floor. "Ain't nothing wrong with me," he growled. "Everything's jake for the big race."

"You look," Peg insisted, "like the last cucumber of summer. Louisville trip didn't go very well, huh?"

Billy reddened, looked up quickly. "What do you know about my trip down there?"

Peg rubbed his nose thoughtfully. "Not a frazzling thing," he admitted. "But I'm a good guesser. I could guess that you saw your gal and don't feel like loving the world on account of it."

Billy gazed at his closed hands reflectively, then opened them slowly. A slow grin came over his face. "Peg," he said, "girls are funny, ain't they?"

"Always was. Always will be. Trouble is," Peg asserted, "that a man lets women get his goat."

"Huh!" Billy thought this over. "Look here, Peg. If I was to finish like the boss wants me to—second to Eddie in the Special—and get three thousand for the one-two stunt, don't you think I'd have enough to tie up to—well—a certain girl?"

Peg's eyes widened. "Big Jim don't really think he'll finish first and second in the Special? Saints above and seven dice! What does Eddie rake down?"

"Five grand—if he makes it ahead of me. Big Jim's got his bank roll on Luxor."

"Me," Peg declared, "I would keep up a harem with three thousand as a nest egg. Maybe," he reflected, "I'd buy me a gas buggy, too." Peg's mind was busy. He thought of Levison and what that special information might net. "Say, Billy," he begged, "keep dumb about that offer of Big Jim's. You know. There's a lot more to this Special than you think. Kincaid's got several millions. And there's a flock of bookies kind of anxious to get the low-down on Big Jim's plans."

According to Peg's ethics it wasn't at all wrong to peddle his latest information. If Luxor and Last Chance were to be used as a team in running down Twister and other entries, well and good, if Big Jim could make good his campaign. No harm would be done for Levison to know; the information would provide for time to hedge. So Peg's conscience was clear that night when he reported to Henry the Egg. It happened that Peg never quite realized how much he had started—until too late. Henry the Egg paid him off, discharged him in fact. And an hour later Levison had the long-distance wires humming. Peg's information was the last addition to a stack of evidence which convinced the bookmaker that the time for drastic action had arrived. His plans were already formulated.

LEVISON met his confederates at Louisville. It was safer than at Cincinnati. The three, Horne of Chicago, Townley, of several points east, and Levison, who had no permanent address, forgathered in the hotel where Margaret was employed.

"Here's the layout," Levison announced, after explaining preliminary facts. "Big Jim Blakely's double-shooting—with Luxor and Last Chance. He's figuring, of course, to have Last Chance jump out and set the pace for the first mile. This Dean kid will step on the gas, too. You can bet your last dollar on that.

"But"—Levison's dark, shifty eyes surveyed his listeners—"here's where we throw a monkey wrench into the works. Boys, we gotta sew up Luxor's rider. That's the logical plan. Eddie Craig's to save Luxor until they hit the home stretch. And I'll bet—any odds—Twister and Luxor will be the only two out in front the last furlong. That's what we're up against."

Horne was a stolid, tight-lipped person. He nodded thoughtfully as Levison finished. "What's Craig's price?" he demanded.

Townley, slim and with the look of a deacon, grinned. "Craig's straight—usually," he observed. "I've found that out more than once."

Levison frowned. "I'm asking for advice," he said. "The days when bookies bought Rolls-Royce jockeys are gone. Craig's a top-notcher. I don't have to tell you that. But we gotta get to him."

"How?" Horne grunted.

"How?" Levison repeated with a shrug.

Townley chuckled. "No use of a girl. He's learned all that."

"Bet he's got his price," Horne cut in. "They all have."

Townley glanced at Levison, winked slowly as if in sympathy. "They all have," he affirmed, "when they're riding for you. Surely you've got something up your sleeve, Levison. No use in calling us down here just to tell us we're up against it."

Levison flushed. "I have got something," he replied. "But—well, it seems ridiculous in a way. It's something Henry the Egg's hatched out. Know how the black hand works? Well, we've figured out a variation. What about sending Eddie a note every other night—pinning it somewhere in his room? There's just gonna be one message. And it's telling Eddie he's gonna have a spill exactly one hundred feet from the finish line in the Special unless—

"Unless Twister's ahead."

"Rats!" Horne exploded. "Damned foolishness!"

Townley leaned back in his chair lazily. "Where's the catch, Levison? I know you've got something else."

"There is," Levison admitted. "Every note's going to have one-half of a hundred-dollar bill pinned to it."

Townley whistled. "And the other half?"

"I'm keeping it," Levison explained. "What'd you think if you got a message like that every other day—with half of a century note to it?"

"I'd think somebody either was crazy or meant business," Townley admitted. "Any other little details? We're in on the cash end of it, of course?"

"You guessed right," Levison said. "The little details are being cared for by my lieutenants. They're rather capable. I'll know blamed quick when Eddie comes through. And I'm figuring it won't take long. One of us stays here at this hotel until Eddie slips away from Latonia and pays us a visit."

"Don't think it'll work," Horne decided. "But I'll kick in. We gotta do something and do it soon."

BILLY DEAN had finished a hard day; he had ridden in all seven races because Eddie Craig, who had been behaving so curiously of late, had canceled his mounts for the day, pleading sickness. Thereafter he had dropped out of sight. Billy wondered mildly at the cause, but judged it to be partly due to worry over the Special. Anyway, that afternoon he had been too busy to do much thinking of any sort. Consequently he was surprised at being summoned to the long-distance booth. Louisville was calling.

Margaret was on the line. And it was a very much excited Margaret. "Billy!" she cried. "I can't talk but a minute. So listen—good! Are—are you going to try and win on Last Chance tomorrow, or is Eddie Craig the one?"

"Why, Margaret, there's no change in instructions," Billy replied. "What are you gonna do? Put up some money?"

"Don't joke," she retorted. "I'm serious, Billy. I'm asking you to do something—without asking why. You ride Last Chance to win tomorrow. Don't leave it to Eddie Craig on Luxor. Go to Mr. Blakely—or wait and do it in the race. You haven't much time anyway—it's tomorrow afternoon, isn't it?"

"Yes, it is," Billy said. "But what's up? Surely—"

"I can't break confidences," Margaret told him. "Listen, Billy! Eddie's here—in Louisville—right now. Does that mean anything?"

That was a knockout. Billy stuttered as he fired a volley of questions into the transmitter. But Margaret cut him off. "And there's a man by the name of Levison. Heard of him?"

"Yep," Billy replied grimly. "I've heard of the gentleman. But what do you know about him? That's what I'm asking."

Margaret had no patience with the green god just then. She was trying to put her appeal across. Something in Billy's voice was stirring her own quick, Irish temper. "Don't be silly! I'm calling you up because I want you to win—the five thousand dollars—if you can. It's for us—"

"What I want to know," Billy interrupted, "is, what do you know about this fellow Levison? He's a crook. I can tell you that much."

Something very much like a sob sounded faintly in the receiver. Then a gulp.

"After all I've done—the eavesdropping—and—and you get mad. Oh! Good-by."

THERE was a click. Billy, too dazed by it all to call Central, listened for seconds, then hung up the receiver slowly. Other jockeys, loafing about quarters before departing for the day, looked at Billy curiously as he gathered up his belongings. But the wrath in his face was too evident. Billy was left severely alone.

The apprentice fanned his anger with jealousy as his fuel. He had done exactly right, bawling her out. Margaret hadn't meant anything wrong, of course. But he'd just bet a dollar she had let Levison flirt with her. Maybe he had taken her to a show, or to dinner. Unconsciously Billy doubled his fists.

And Eddie Craig! Eddie at Louisville—and Levison! But that couldn't be possible. Billy wondered what horse the bookmaker wanted to put over. Eddie was straight, always had been. He wouldn't double-cross Big Jim. A fellow couldn't get away with that in a big race. Still—

"What's on your mind?"

Billy halted abruptly, puzzled at first at his location. Walking swiftly, he had reached the residence section of Covington. He didn't know for how long he had been walking. It was growing dusk. And standing there, rubbing his nose inquisitively, was Peg Daughtry.

" 'Lo, Peg. Just sort of walking some steam off. What time is it, anyway?"

"Must be after six," Peg replied. "Just going out for supper. Thought I was seeing things when you came staving along. Wanta eat with me?"

Billy agreed mechanically. The restaurant Peg chose was unfamiliar, evidently run for the benefit of an industrial plant near by. Billy took one look at the thick, earthenware dishes filled with steaming vegetables and stew, then transferred his attention to Peg. Never had the apprentice seen food vanish so swiftly.

Directly Peg sighed deeply, glancing with regret at the emptied dishes. "Still feel kind of hollow," he observed. "Reckon I can last, though." He rubbed his nose, gazing at Billy thoughtfully. "Something in the air—about the Special. Ain't got it yet. But I aim to."

"You can get one thing—now," Billy announced. "Big Jim's gonna have Eddie, or me, down in front of the procession tomorrow. That ain't no pipe dream, either."

Peg's eyes narrowed. "Eddie Craig slipped out of town today," he remarked, with an attempt at carelessness. "None of my business. But I'm curious."

Billy considered a diagram he had wrought with bread crumbs. Peg was after information; that was his particular business in life. That and plunging himself when he considered certain facts authentic. Peg wasn't always a tout. And he possessed a streak of loyalty to certain persons. Understanding Peg's code was impossible, yet Billy had the hunch that the tout desired to do him and Big Jim a good turn, if possible.

Ever since the conversation with Margaret Billy had been mulling over the information concerning Eddie Craig. It was hard; Billy's admiration for the jockey was deep-seated. It was upsetting, to say the least, this discovery that Billy's accepted model was faulty. Billy looked up suddenly. "What are you going to play—in the Special?" he asked.

"I'm thinking," Peg replied, "of shooting the works on Big Jim's entry. But Eddie—"

"Eddie went to Louisville," Billy interrupted. "Know Levison pretty well, don't you? Well, Levison's in Louisville, too."

The two were silent for a time. Then Peg spoke up. "I'm an awful dumbbell—a gee-whiz of a dumbbell! So that's the layout. That's why Levison's gang was so cocky today. Gonna frame Big Jim, huh?

"Kid," he proposed, "let's attend the grand meeting. Levison's coming back tonight. Bound to, for the round-up's set for ten o'clock. Figure Eddie might be there, too. We might get a little action."

"Action," Billy replied, "is what I crave. Let's go."

IT WAS after ten o'clock when two figures tiptoed up to the rear of a wooden building where a bare inch of light between window sill and curtain fell upon an alley-way. The conspirators moved cautiously between barrels and empty crates, on the alert for a possible lookout. The front portion of the building housed a respectable cigar and soft-drink stand. And Peg, knowing the conventions were observed rather strictly, guessed that half of those inside the tiny, rear room, had come in from the alley.

"They think everything's safe," Peg whispered. "Squat and take a peep at the gang. Yep. There's Eddie—over in a corner—behind Levison. Don't look any too proud, does he?"

Billy felt his face grow hot. All his suspicions did not create the indignation that he experienced at witnessing this gathering. And here was Eddie in the flesh; it certainly was a concrete demonstration.

"That's Horne—the pug-faced stiff," Peg growled under his breath. "And the yegg by the door is the official bouncer—Henry the Egg."

Levison was scribbling something upon a memorandum. This finished, he passed it around and each person attached his signature. Then the bookmaker faced Eddie. Billy and Peg edged nearer.

"Safety first," Levison said. "Just a little testimonial from our friends in case you forget about our agreement. I think we can count out the money now. Here's forty more halves in this envelope. You'll find them right handy after the race. They'll be handy because you'll get another envelope, and the other halves will be inside. Piece them together and you'll find the answer to our puzzle."

The bookmaker's voice became more threatening. "And you squeal on us, you pie-faced shrimp—just you try it. That wasn't bull about getting you in the race. Don't think it wasn't. We mean business. You get your five thousand for pulling Luxor. That's a damned sight easier than trying to win and get it. We get ours. You get yours."

Billy drew away from the window. He was trembling. Peg, with the deliberation of a cat, motioned. The pair moved stealthily toward the door. "Shoulder to shoulder," Peg whispered. "I got a blackjack—if they get too hot."

What happened couldn't be described in sequence because it was more or less a jumble. Four of the eight presumed the invaders who burst into the room were officers and acted accordingly. The first one out of the window carried the sash with him. And it is likely that the person who smashed the single light globe did it subconsciously. Anyway Billy and Peg arose in darkness after their headlong tumble to the floor. Billy was after Levison; and he found him. Two things he wanted to do badly; one was to pommel the bookmaker to his heart's content; the other, to get possession of the damning memorandum. He missed both—at first—but he didn't miss Levison's knee which bumped into the apprentice rider's stomach. That was the bookmaker's supreme act of defense. And he erred in not departing at once. For, a second later, the door leading into the front room swung slowly open. The light made Levison the target for a pair of the most lightninglike fists in all Kentucky.

The conflict behind him ceased and Billy called out sharply: "Peg! Not down?"

"I'm not," Peg grunted. And as if punctuating the sentence there came the sound of a body falling, then silence.

It was the beginning of the end. Levison comprehended the sudden stillness. Likewise Billy's flailing arms were conveying blows with precision. Plunging toward the window Levison emulated his less valiant companions. He departed with expedition and efficiency. And Billy, whirling, fists before him, saw Peg looking down rather thoughtfully, the while rubbing his nose.

"Got so busy scrambling Henry the Egg I plumb forgot about Eddie," he observed. "We'd better beat it. There'll be forty-nine cops here in two seconds."

From beneath a table at the farther corner of the room there sounded a quavery voice. "This is me, fellers—Eddie. I'm coming out."

"Good night!" It was all Peg could think of. "Shake a leg! The gang's coming in by the front way."

Outside Billy darted from the path, stooped and picked up a bit of paper. "I got it!" he called. "Levison's note. Now we gotta run for it."

THE three held a conference in Peg's room an hour later. Billy and Peg heard Eddie's story through, how the anonymous messages had shaken Craig's nerve as nothing else could. "Uncle of mine got croaked by a blackmail gang once," he explained. "Maybe Levison got wise to it." The jockey still seemed afraid to speak freely, eyes downcast. "Them notes, and the torn bills—it looked like business. And then Levison came out in the open. Told me—not asked me—to hike down to Louisville. There's where they laid down the law. Levison came on back with me. Said we'd close the deal up here. You fellers know the rest."

"I'll say we do!" Peg replied, rubbing sundry bruised spots. "Wouldn't have, though, if I hadn't picked up a message in the air. Met Billy and I guessed the rest. Now then, Billy, we'd better talk turkey. What say?"

"Eddie can still ride, I reckon," Billy answered. All at once the fight was out of him. He was thinking of Margaret. "If he wants to ride—straight."

"B-b-but I want to," Eddie protested. "Only—I'm scared."

"Rats!" Peg was disgusted. "You ain't the first jockey who got in a jam with yeggs. Bob up tomorrow and give Luxor what he needs. That's all."

So it was settled. Billy and Eddie were to remain in Peg's room for the night. Peg made arrangements to use another room at the boarding-house.

The riders had very little to say. Both were self-conscious, Eddie from shame and Billy because he mourned disillusion. But it was the apprentice who fell asleep first. He recalled, later, that Eddie tossed about and appeared awake. Then, despite the fact that Margaret was very much on his mind, Billy drifted into slumber.

Peg Daughtry hustled up the stairway at seven o'clock the next morning. He felt a certain responsibility in the matter. Besides, the aroma of coffee and smell of frying bacon couldn't be downed. Peg was ready to eat. So he pounded upon the door and called upon the jockeys to get up. Billy replied sleepily. Peg grinned as he heard the springs creak. But at a sudden exclamation, the tout shoved open the door. Billy was staring at the bed in amazement. Eddie was gone, clothing and all.

"Now you've done it," Peg said. "Gave us the slip, huh? What's that on the pillow?"

It was a note, scribbled on the back of an envelope.

"I'll be there at weighing-in time," it read. "Don't worry."

Billy whistled. "Peg," he demanded hoarsely, "surely he didn't—didn't go back after the other halves—"

"—of the money—the century notes," Peg cut in. "Gosh! Say—listen, Billy. Don't take no chances. The shrimp! After what we tried to do for him! You'd better talk with Big Jim this morning."

Billy shook his head. "I'm not a tattler, unless it just has to be. Suppose we just wait. I'm healthy, and in my right mind, and on Last Chance. Eddie shows up and I keep absolutely mum. Only, he'd better ride Luxor out. For if he don't keep ahead of me — and Twister — I'm crawling him right before the judges, so help me."

So, because there wasn't very much else to do, Peg and Billy waited. The morning grew cold; and the advance guard of a record crowd, out to witness the Special, began to drift through turnstiles at Latonia. Eleven o'clock, and the sun peeped from behind scudding clouds, giving a promise that there would not be rain, at least, until after the races.

Peg, loitering near the entrance, saw a slim figure, clad in a heavy overcoat, enter through the pass gate and skirt the crowd hurriedly. "Lil Eddie's back," the tout observed, rubbing his nose critically. "He's back and I got a hunch getting news of his whereabouts is as easy as having a tooth pulled. Reckon I'd better pass the word to Billy."

"FOR the twentieth time," Billy Dean inquired, "I want to know what you're going to do?"

Billy was talking to Eddie Craig in jockey quarters just before going to the paddock. Within five minutes the post parade for the Special would be under way.

"I'm telling you everything's jake," Eddie replied, a hint of defiance in his voice. "Can't a feller work out things his own way?"

"Not when my way is mixed up in it," Billy retorted. "You can swear you stayed over in Cincy last night. But you gotta prove it to me darned quick. If you don't, you know what's coming, don't you?"

Gregory, who was riding Twister, came up grinning. "You birds don't look like a pair of loving friends to me," he observed. "Better toss to see who's going to come in second. I'll be out in front."

"You got a good horse," Billy replied seriously. "And he's going to be right up there at the finish. Sorry you're to be disappointed, old-timer. But—me an' Eddie here—"

The bugle cut Billy off. The eleven jockeys who had been waiting with a certain air of tension, arose with relief. Halfway down the stairs Billy moved nearer Eddie. "You pull Luxor and I'm going to beat you to death, so help me," he warned.

"You leave me alone," Eddie replied. "How can I ride with everybody on my ear?"

"I'll be on more'n your ear," Billy shot back as they entered the paddock.

Blakely's two horses were well separated. Luxor held the post position of honor—number one—while Last Chance had drawn the extreme outside. So Billy, as they filed down the track and past the stands, studied Eddie and Luxor carefully. For weeks he had known that Last Chance was in better condition than Luxor; and there was little doubt in his mind that Big Jim realized the same fact.

"A man's a dunce who'll bet on one horse and not his entry," Billy reflected. "Big Jim oughta thought of that. If I owned a horse I wouldn't put up a fortune with a bunch of crooks. Leastways if I had two, I wouldn't pick out one to bet on. Why, the boss was positively white behind the ears he was so scared."

There were other things Billy thought of on the way to the section of the track at the head of the stretch. He rode slowly because early arrivals at the post were having their hands full and the start promised numerous delays. Billy was thinking of Margaret and what a fool he had been. "First thing after this race," he reflected, "is a telephone call to Margaret. And I'm gonna tell her I've landed either three or five thousand dollars. Ain't no if's about that. If Eddie Craig double-crosses Big Jim, I won't. Hear that, horse? You ain't after the Special; you're after Billy Dean's honeymoon and the biggest bust a bookmaking gang of hams ever got. Act pretty, Last Chance. We're at the post."

The start wasn't delayed so long, after all. One break beneath the webbing, a sharp tongue-lashing aimed at Gregory by the starter and Twister led back by two assistants. Billy, glancing sharply at Eddie, saw that young gentleman alert. Relieved somewhat, Billy figured out his campaign. Big Jim's last words at the paddock had been to set the early pace. And that, for a jockey whose mount is on the outside, is job enough.

Yet Billy did it. He sensed the barrier's release just as the trigger was sprung. Whip ready, he brought it down and Last Chance was in the air before Twister had gathered his haunches for the forward leap. Swinging his body with each jump Billy kept his whip working, working in toward the rail. And Last Chance, because the colt was fit, responded so well that Blakely's colors showed in front before the upper reaches of the stands were passed. Gregory took Twister up just behind and permitted Last Chance to keep the lead. Evidently he was aware of Blakely's campaign and chose to lie back with the second division, alongside Luxor.

BILLY glanced beneath his elbow, saw that he was a length ahead. At the lower turn none of the thundering field attempted to dispute his advantage. Whereupon Billy took another wrap in the lines and began to hand ride Last Chance in to the back stretch. "Gonna try and smother me down the lane," he chuckled. "Bet we didn't go that first half in more'n forty-eight."

Gregory realized the slow pace. But it was to his advantage as well. Just to demonstrate he understood, however, Twister's rider let out on his lines a trifle, a procedure which resulted in the horse moving up swiftly. "Better step on the gas, Billy," Gregory called out. "I'm gonna run away and leave you at the head of the stretch."

Billy merely grinned. He was saving his

wind. Gregory obviously wasn't worried yet by Billy's lead. That astute rider was quite satisfied to keep abreast of Luxor during the early stages. However, now they were nearing the upper turn, where the back stretch ends and the grim battle for supremacy in the home stretch begins. Already the distant roar from the stands was swelling.

But where was Eddie? Billy caught a glimpse of his riding mate four lengths to the rear. And Gregory, leaning forward, was just beginning his challenge.

Five seconds more and Billy Dean would have to decide. He would have to decide whether to keep Last Chance in the lead and win for Big Jim, or take a chance on Eddie Craig bringing Luxor up. The sound of Twister's onrushing hoofs grew in volume. Last Chance was being overhauled rapidly. Billy risked one more glance backward before going for his whip. What he saw set his heart speeding. Eddie was riding with all his might, yet Luxor was not coming as he should.

"Both of us or none," Eddie breathed, bringing down his whip with the rapidity of a trap drummer. "I gotta keep out in front—just gotta."

TWISTER kept coming up. Gregory wasn't joking now; he was as much in earnest as Billy. The jockey realized Kincaid's horse had the fight of its career ahead. And the tumult from the stands told of frenzied thousands glorying in the sight.

"Keep going!" Billy screamed to his mount. "You just gotta keep going!"

But Twister matched jump for jump with Last Chance. Down the stretch they swept, Last Chance a bare nose ahead, Luxor pounding along ten feet behind. On and on and on. They were a furlong from the finish. Billy forgot Eddie Craig. All he realized now was an intense desire to keep ahead of Twister. Sobbing, he climbed farther up the thoroughbred's neck as thousands screamed at the pair. "Go on!" he prayed. "Go on!"

Placing judges were already sighting along the finish posts as a new note arose from the great mass of humanity extending from fence to the uppermost seats of the stands. Something was happening out on the track, something which Billy Dean did not see—but heard. Luxor leaped forward as Eddie Craig, struggling like a demon, fairly lifted the colt onward. Luxor tore by Twister, out in the center of the track. Luxor thundered beyond Twister, all within the last hundred yards. And Billy sensed, rather than saw, his riding mate sweep by.

The three thoroughbreds finished noses apart, Luxor, Last Chance and Twister.

A furlong beyond the clubhouse enclosure Eddie Craig brought Luxor down to a canter. Limp from the reaction, he grinned wearily at Billy Dean as Last Chance was wheeled about. "Kid," Eddie shouted, "they said something'd happen to me in the last hundred yards. And it did."

Billy came up alongside. He gulped once or twice before he could speak. "Eddie! That was the best ride I ever saw. Reckon me an' Peg are plumb sorry about—about things."

Eddie shook his head. "You wasn't either, Billy. They had me—till you an' Peg busted in on us. Listen, Billy! I slipped off an' saw Big Jim last night—made a clean break. An' the boss—say, there's a square guy—he took them halves of bills and musta made Levison eat 'em."

Both could see Big Jim waiting before the judges' stand. The band was playing furiously, and photographers were adjusting cameras. An attendant held a floral decoration—for Luxor.

Billy sighed. "Me an' Peg didn't give you credit, Eddie. But we done the best we could."

Some five minutes later Billy realized how well he had done. Big Jim Blakely, hoarse from shouting, grabbed Billy as that young man came out from the weighing room. "You too," he announced, "you too—five thousand. I'll give you a check tonight. And send Peg Daughtry over. He'll be waiting up around the paddock. I'm gonna give him a check, too. You little devils!" The hug he gave Billy caused the onlookers to chuckle.

Billy tore loose. "Gotta hurry, Mr. Blakely. I'll tell Peg. But I'm in a hurry."

"Uh—what's that?" Blakely demanded. "What's wrong?"

"Me," Billy replied. "But I'm gonna straighten that out in a hurry. Gonna put in a long-distance call to Louisville.

"To Margaret," he added under his breath, already sprinting up the track.

*A Complete Novel*

# The Grand Duke's Finances

### *Readers of Everybody's Will Recall the Recent Series of Adventures of Mr. Collin. Here the Genial Rascal Turns Up Again in a Novel Published Complete in This Issue*

## By Frank Heller

**Illustrations by Joseph M. Clement**

"IS HIS Highness sleeping?"

"His Highness has just deigned to awaken."

"Will you please ask him what he would like for breakfast, Auguste?"

"What have you, Joaquin?"

"H'm! Two kinds of radishes, celery, lettuce, green peppers—"

"Good Lord, that isn't a breakfast you are describing, Joaquin, that's a botanical garden!"

"—sardines, mussels and rabbit."

"H'm! If there is nothing else then there is really no need of my asking him."

"It always seems more polite, Auguste. An absolute sovereign should at all times be consulted in affairs which do not concern the Government."

"Your ideas do you honor, Joaquin; like your cooking, they show that you love France. I'll be back in a moment."

The above conversation took place on a mild February morning in 1910 on the island of Minorca in the Mediterranean. It was half-past nine. The sun shone through embroidered, somewhat threadbare curtains into a little room, the walls of which, at equal intervals, bore a six-pearled heraldic crown, alternating with an even more heraldic lion which, with tail raised, held a halbert between its paws. Above, illuminating each noble beast with its originally golden, now silvery white rays, glistened a five-pointed star. The other furnishings of the room were in keeping with the draperies and the faded armorial stars. Sofas and chairs from the time of the Empire stood in a circle about a rococo table; a Louis XV *guéridon* completed the furnishings; and, irrespective of age, all this furniture bore the same mark of antiquity.

It was one of those small rooms, used for various purposes, which formed a part of the castle belonging to his Highness, Don Ramón, the Grand Duke of Minorca. Without doubt, the historical island which lay off the coast of Spain had seen better days.

Since early in the sixteenth century the island had received one blow after another; the fleet was destroyed, the crops failed, or a dissipated and luxury-loving ruler squandered the rapidly disappearing wealth of the island. The nineteenth century was a difficult time for all absolute monarchs, and not least so for the House of Ramiros. It is true, "industry and trade flourished," but the revenue from all these was a mere nothing in helping pay the debts of the eighteenth century, the interest on which kept them increasing in size like an avalanche on its downward path. The inevitable result followed; the Grand Duchy fell into the hands of usurers. As early as the middle of the century its position was such that not even one reputable banking firm would have a thing to do with Minorca; more than once the bare necessities were lacking in the ducal palace, and more than once did Don Ramón XVIII, his son Don Luis XI, and in turn his son Don Ramón XIX, think of abdicating. "It is a burdensome inheritance, my son," Don Ramón XIX was in the habit of saying to his young heir-apparent, "that you will receive from me." So it had proved, although Don Ramón took it, as he took everything, with a good grace and a sanguine outlook on life.

WITH his plump hands clasped behind his back Joaquin, his servant, stood lost in reverie, as he gazed at the portraits on the walls, when the door behind him was opened and the curtains in front of it were drawn aside; he heard Auguste make some remark in an undertone and turned in time to receive with a bow his Highness Don Ramón XX of Minorca, Count of Bethlehem and Protector of the Holy Sepulcher.

With the slight limp which characterized his gait, he now came in from his dressing-room, clad in a gray lounge suite, and puffing big clouds of smoke from his cigar. His gigantic body seemed even larger than usual in the bright morning light, and stood out strangely against the faded splendor of the anteroom. Contrary to his usual custom, he had let Auguste part his hair on the left, which made him somewhat resemble Caruso, and he had turned up the ends of his short black mustache. As he caught sight of Joaquin a smile flowed over his face.

"Good morning, Joaquin," said he in a slightly harsh bass voice. "You sent Auguste in to ask what I would like for breakfast?"

"Yes, your Highness."

"What good does that do, Joaquin?"

"Why, at one time your Highness was pleased to command that—"

"I know; but I ask you, what earthly good does it do? There is nothing to eat, anyway."

"Your Highness! There are delicious hors d'œuvres, two kinds of radishes, celery, lettuce, green peppers—"

"My Lord, Joaquin! Just a moment—do you know who I am?"

"Do I— Your Highness is Duke Ramón XX of Majorca and Minorca, Cou—"

"Correct! I thought you took me for Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. Two kinds of radishes, celery, lettuce and green peppers—you are forgetting the hay and chaff. And still you insist there is something to eat!"

"But of course! Those only count as hors d'œuvres; afterwards come mussels and rabbit."

"Rabbit! By the shade of Don Jerónimo! Always and forever that despicable breed of animal! How long have I been eating rabbit, Joaquin?"

"Your Highness had hare yesterday, and for tomorrow I thought of preparing some *blanquette de veau*."

"*Blanquette de veau!* Joaquin, Joaquin, where did you get hold of the veal!"

"My uncle, your Highness, from Majorca. He is a great admirer of your Highness—"

"Don't mention the Majorcans, Joaquin! A pack of worthless rebels! You know how they treated my forefathers."

"Your Highness, no one deplores it more than I. I was born on Majorca and am a Majorcan by descent; but in my heart, your Highness, I have always been a good Minorcan, the same as my uncle."

"Joaquin!"

"Your Highness?"

"Do you believe that your uncle— I have just thought of something."

"Your Highness means whether my uncle has other calves to spare?"

"No. You see—I mean, do you believe your excellent uncle might care for the title of purveyor to the grand-ducal Court? In return for a little compensation—"

"Your Highness, I— Your Highness, my— Your Highness knows that the title of purveyor to the court has been—has been—"

"Rather liberally dealt out, unfortunately. I know, Joaquin. Therefore you think your uncle would not—"

"Your Highness, my uncle is a Minorcan deep down in his heart the same as I, and a great admirer of your Highness; but I do not know—I do not believe—"

"I understand, a good Minorcan, but not good enough to become purveyor to the Court. Well, between ourselves, I think he is right. . . . Auguste, do you know whether any mail has come today?"

"Yes, your Highness. Señor Paqueno is waiting in the study."

"Good! Prepare breakfast, then, Joaquin, with whatever provisions there are."

Nodding to Joaquin, who disappeared with a bow, the Grand Duke then entered his study, where a little man in cutaway, his hair and beard besprinkled with gray, and wearing glasses, awaited him.

WITH a more than usually troubled air Señor Paqueno, Counselor to His Highness, greeted the entrance of his master. There was an expression of grave earnestness in his eyes and a nervousness in his bearing which immediately had the customary effect of increasing the Grand Duke's good humor. After greeting him with a wave of his cigar, he stuck his hands into his trouser pockets, looked at Señor Esteban with eyes half closed, and said:

"Good morning, Paqueno!"

"Good morning, your Highness."

"Did you sleep well, Paqueno?"

"Yes, thank you. And your Highness?"

As a matter of fact, Señor Paqueno had spent a miserable night, but it would never have entered his head to confess it before he had convinced himself as to how his master had slept.

"Capitally, Paqueno; a man with affairs in such a bad state as mine always sleeps capitally."

"Your Highness is joking. Affairs in a bad state are not considered an aid to sleep."

The Grand Duke gave a hearty laugh.

"If they are in as bad a state as mine—that is to say, absolutely hopeless—a person sleeps excellently if he is normal. There was only one occasion when I slept poorly, and that was a couple of years ago when I was hoping for better times. Well, what was there in the mail today?"

Señor Paqueno's face again assumed the gloomy expression it had borne at the time of the Grand Duke's entrance. As he drew out some letters from a portfolio, he said:

"About the same as usual, your Highness. About the same. . . . There is a letter from Altenstein of Cadiz, who says that the interest for 1908 must be paid; otherwise he must inform the Spanish Government."

"The interest for 1908, Paqueno? What year is this?"

"This is 1910, your Highness, but the interest for 1908 has not been paid yet."

"That I can well imagine. I thought you meant for 1898."

Señor Paqueno drew out another letter from the portfolio, and said:

"There is also another letter from Thomson and French at Rome."

"Really! And what do Thomson and French at Rome have to say?"

"That it is impossible for them to wait any longer for the 1905 and 1906 interest on their loan of 1905. Unless something is done, they say, they must sell the security or—"

"What is the security, Paqueno?"

"The island of Ivize, your Highness, and all its resources. Or start diplomatic proceedings."

"That's all right, Paqueno. The interest for 1905 and 1906—and now it is only 1910! Modern business haste, Paqueno! If my late lamented father had ever heard such strangulation methods mentioned by the bankers! Who is the next?"

"Viviani, your Highness, in Marseilles. Perhaps your Highness remembers he is the one who has the salt taxes as security for a loan. He writes in, complaining that these yield too little."

"The Italian rogue!"

"Not content with complaining, your Highness, he even has the audacity to burst into accusations; he insists that our figures are open to question and that he has been 'enticed into a more than dubious enterprise.' "

"The shameless rogue! A dubious enterprise from which he reaps fifteen per cent if he does one! Write to him that if he doesn't look out, I will issue a grand-ducal decree making the use of salt in Minorca punishable by death. Then he can look out for his security!"

"Your Highness is in good humor. Rest assured I will handle Viviani as he deserves. I am not afraid of Thomson and French, either; it is a fine old firm and will listen to reason. We can put off Altenstein too, with the argument that your Highness just brought up. His insistence is due to immature judgment."

Señor Paqueno stopped a moment and nervously polished his glasses. Then he resumed with a shamefaced look at the Grand Duke:

"Unfortunately, there is also a letter from

Semjon Marcowitz. Your Highness remembers our affair with Marcowitz of Paris, and the affair of 1908?"

"Why not, Paqueno? That was only two years ago."

Señor Paqueno sighed. In an utterly dejected voice he continued as though talking to himself, constantly pausing as though to give the Grand Duke opportunity to interrupt:

"Then perhaps your Highness recalls at that time a report being circulated in the newspapers about an engagement between the Grand Duke of Minorca and a Grand Duchess of Russia, who was said to be as beautiful as she was rich—and that these reports did not lack foundation. For two months the negotiations were carried on between Count Fedor Obelinsky, the Russian ambassador at Madrid, on the one side and me on the other. And one day the Grand Duchess herself, during what might be called a fit of girlish romanticism, wrote a letter to your Highness—a letter which was not in the same official tone. Does your Highness remember?"

SENOR PAQUENO gave his master an appealing look as though earnestly begging that he might be excused from continuing. The Grand Duke stood absolutely still, with bowed head, and stared out of the window.

With another deep sigh Señor Paqueno resumed in the same weary voice:

"In 1908, when this happened, we were in a more desperate position than usual. Our government bonds were quoted at 47½, and money could not be procured at even 100 per cent. And with it all, there was only the necessity of holding out for a short time and keeping up appearances until the engagement was actually arranged! But we couldn't even raise enough money for that; no one believed our promises, and the engagement was looked upon as mere talk. It was then we turned to Semjon Marcowitz."

Señor Paqueno's voice trembled with emotion; for the second time he stopped and nervously looked at his master, who stood in his former position as immovable as ever with downcast eyes. His cigar had gone out, and he unceasingly rolled it around and around in the corner of his mouth.

"We received two hundred thousand," continued Señor Paqueno almost whisperingly, "in return for a note for three hundred thousand—and security, the nature of which was mentioned in the note. Semjon Marcowitz, who knew the disposition of the Russian court, realized that he risked nothing by lending on security of that kind. A letter such as the one written by the Grand Duchess Olga was worth a million as easily as three hundred thousand in his—"

He stopped short and involuntarily leaped back a step; the Grand Duke had sprung forward and, flushed with anger, stood towering over him, his hands in his pockets.

"Stop, Paqueno!" he cried. "You talk as though we were a couple of cold-blooded scoundrels, ready to sell our honor for a few paltry hundred thousand. Don't you know how long it took before I would have any part in the wretched business? You, Paqueno, you should have stopped me!"

"Your Highness does me an injustice," answered Señor Paqueno with a look of gentle reproach. "That I ventured to encourage the plan no one has regretted more than I. Oh, what an old blind fool I was then! But I was tempted by the most seductive thing on earth, your Highness—by hope! I still remember all the hopes which awakened within us when the engagement was being planned."

"And who in the devil's name could have thought that the engagement would come to nothing, Paqueno? Tell me, who?"

"No one, your Highness; but, unfortunately, so it stood in the book of Fate. Grand Duke Nicholas did not give his consent, and the Grand Duchess Olga in spite of everything was his dutiful daughter. . . . He is dead now—I do not know whether your Highness saw the notice in the papers a few months ago? And we, your Highness, stand here like criminals, with the risk of being exposed at any time by Semjon Marcowitz."

The Grand Duke stamped on the floor until the old marble slabs echoed.

"Yes, that is just what makes me so furious!" cried he. "Here we both stand, as you say, Paqueno, with the pleasant prospect of our pictures appearing in the sensational press within a month's time: 'Further disclosures from the blemish spot of Europe—Don Ramón's latest exploits,' and so on to the bitter end. And what advantage did we derive from our two hundred thousand? Unless I am mistaken, it was the Jews in London and Amsterdam who received the money for their interest. When is that wretched loan due?"

"On the thirteenth of March, your Highness."

"A month from today! And Marcowitz of course wants the whole of it?"

"I don't believe so. Marcowitz will be willing enough to renew it."

"H'm! I have an idea what such a renewal would mean. No, the matter must be settled once for all. I will not have it on my conscience any longer."

Don Ramón resumed his promenade up and down the room, it was evident that his good humor had deserted him for the moment. He threw open a window and with knitted brows stared down at the harbor, where the water drowsily rippled in the sunshine, and at the small houses crowded together on the terraces rising from the shore. The palms rustled in the morning wind; from the distance came the rumbling in the streets of Port Mahon; and at intervals the odor of warm tar was wafted up from the harbor. Suddenly he turned to Paqueno, who was gloomily staring at the tips of his shoes.

"Is that German Binzer still here?"

"Yes, he is here. How did your Highness know his name?"

"Bah—in Minorca! What is he doing?"

"I don't know, your Highness. He has made a number of trips to the interior of the island. They say he has been taking photographs for a German concern."

"H'm. At least we needn't be afraid of his being a spy and photographing our fortifications, for Nature has razed them all with the exception of the old rookery here in Port Mahon. Has he been here long?"

"A month, your Highness."

The door to the dining-room was noiselessly opened and Auguste appeared on the threshold.

"Breakfast is served, your Highness."

The Grand Duke brightened up and shook off the troubled manner as a big Newfoundland dog shakes the water from his coat.

"Share the rabbit with me, Paqueno," said he, pushing his old Minister of Finance before him into the dining-room. "We both need something strengthening!"

THE Grand Duke was lingering over his coffee and cigar when the door opened and Auguste came in. There was the shadow of a discreet smile lurking in the corners of the domestic's mouth.

"There is a man outside," said he, "who requests an audience with your Highness." The tone of Auguste's voice was indescribable. "He has no visiting card, but he says that his name is Binzer of Frankfort."

The Grand Duke straightened up in his chair and stared at Auguste.

"Binzer of Frankfort! When you speak of the devil you— Listen to that, Paqueno, Binzer desires audience of me—the lamb seeks the lion!"

The face of the old Minister of Finance expressed absolute and unadulterated astonishment.

"What can he want, your Highness?" he stammered.

"To take our pictures, I suppose. But he will get little satisfaction if that's what he wants. The newspapers would have too good a description of us then when we disappear a month from now!"

Señor Paqueno shuddered.

"Show the fellow in, Auguste," said the Grand Duke with a laugh. "Tell him that his Highness is granting audience in the dining-room, since it is Saturday."

Auguste hastened back to the antechamber and a moment later ushered Herr Binzer of Frankfort into the Grand Duke's dining-room.

Herr Binzer's appearance, as he passed by Auguste, suggested a certain rough-hewn energy. His thick-set figure was somewhat inclined to corpulency, and his hands, adorned with various rings, were small and fat. Blinkingly, he bowed low before the Grand Duke. Don Ramón lightly waved his cigar in answer.

"You have requested an audience?" he asked. "This is my friend, Señor Paqueno."

Señor Paqueno, who had risen at Herr Binzer's entrance, bowed politely and the latter acknowledged his greeting with a slight nod. Don Ramón smiled slightly. This species of European was new to him. What did the man want? And what were his motives? Don Ramón hardly needed to see the lines around Herr Binzer's eyes and around the corners of his mouth to guess; as plainly as possible they said: "*Geschäft!* Business with the Grand Duke of Minorca!" This did not happen often—but when it did it was rather certain to be a bit of bad business, through which the duke in question was predestined to lose. Smiling to himself, Don Ramón decided to make the game as difficult as possible for Herr Binzer, who seemed embarrassed as to how he should begin.

"I have requested an audience for—for the purpose of paying my respects to your Highness. . . . I have been here on Minorca now for some time. . . . I thought it fitting that—"

His Spanish was absolutely correct, and it was evident he was trying to make the tone of his voice as subservient as the expression on his face.

"Ah!" said Don Ramón politely. "That is very kind of you, Herr Binzer. It is not often that strangers come to Minorca, and it is still more seldom that they are as courteous as you."

Herr Binzer expressed his agreement with a smile, and seated himself in one of the old mahogany chairs by the table. Old Señor Paqueno turned red as a beet. Santiago de Coruña! This German to sit down! He was on the point of saying something when Don Ramón stopped him with a movement of his hand. There was a glimmer in the corner of his eye. Herr Binzer evidently amused him.

"Paqueno," said he, "for goodness' sake, sit down!"

HERR BINZER, who had stretched one leg over the other, again began to speak.

"I am greatly pleased with my visit to Minorca," said he. "It is a charming island. The scenery is exceptionally beautiful, and the climate—"

"I am really very glad," said Don Ramón in his heartiest tone. "People who love nature are never really bad. And as you must have noticed, Herr Binzer, our scenery is almost the only thing we have here on Minorca!"

"Yes, yes. Otherwise, I understand, everything is in a bad way." Herr Binzer smiled deploringly.

In spite of this insulting remark, the expression on Don Ramón's face was more friendly than ever.

"You sympathize with us, Herr Binzer. It is really too kind of you. May I have the pleasure of offering you something to drink?" he asked, and without waiting for an answer poured out a tumbler of brandy. Herr Binzer seemed to hesitate but as the Grand Duke raised his wineglass to drink to him, he lifted the tumbler and emptied it to the last dregs. Don Ramón moved his chair so that his back was to the window.

"You came here from Germany, Herr Binzer?"

Evidently Herr Binzer was beginning to feel steadier in his saddle after the brandy. He leaned back in his chair, and his smiles were no longer so numerous or subservient.

"No, from Mex—from America," said he. "I have been over there a long time; been around a bit, here, there and everywhere, *versteht sich;* made a bit this way and that—through houses, mines, stock. Anything is worth while as long as you can make money by it, eh?"

Herr Binzer laughed heartily at his own words.

"And you always succeeded in making a bit, one way or another, didn't you, Herr Binzer?"

Herr Binzer gave a mysterious smile at the Grand Duke's question.

"Oh, a bit," said he. "A person must provide for his old age, *nicht?* I made my money and got out in time. Bad times nowadays!"

The Grand Duke raised his glass to drink with him.

"Unfortunately, you are more than right, Herr Binzer. And you intend going back to Germany from here?"

Herr Binzer hastily emptied his glass.

"Well," said he, "that depends. I don't know. Here in Minorca I have found something which perhaps I would like to get hold of."

"What in the name of Heaven is it?" said the Grand Duke earnestly. "The climate is not for sale, Herr Binzer."

Herr Binzer laughed loudly. By this time he had entirely forgotten his earlier groveling politeness, and a slight reddening of his cheeks seemed to show that the brandy had begun to have an effect.

"No, and everything else has been pawned, you mean. Ha, ha! I know that well enough. I have made a few little investigations myself, in case I might do a bit of business here. You should always know how people stand before doing business with them!"

He did not notice that the Grand Duke blushed slightly; but continued in the same free and easy tone:

"I also know that all the land here belongs to the Government. . . ."

"And I am the Government, Herr Binzer," the Grand Duke interrupted dryly.

"Of course, so that if any one wants to buy anything, he must come here—to the sole member of the firm, eh? And that is why I have come. I was out by Punta Hermosa a few days ago—beautiful scenery, fine situation—and I looked over the old castle there."

"Don Jerónimo the Lucky's old castle," muttered the Grand Duke between his teeth. "Well, Herr Binzer?"

"What do you want for it?"

For a fraction of a second the Grand Duke looked at Herr Binzer with such an air of reflection that the gentleman in question began to hitch uneasily in his chair: it looked as though Don Ramón were considering whether it would be better to shoot Herr Binzer on the spot or merely to kick him out the door. After a moment, however, he said quietly:

"You seem to have informed yourself thoroughly about us, Herr Binzer. Haven't you discovered something rather peculiar concerning the Castle of Punta Hermosa?"

"I have never had any interest for antiquarian and historical matters," said Herr Binzer indifferently. "I like the situation, and I have the means to buy the place."

"I doubt it," said the Grand Duke. "If you yourself have not discovered it, I can tell you what is peculiar about the Castle of Punta Hermosa. As a matter of fact, it is a twofold peculiarity. In the first place, Punta Hermosa is free of mortgages, and secondly, it does not belong to me. It is the only bit of land on Minorca which is not hypothecated, and it is the only bit which does not belong to me."

"*Verflucht nochmal,*" said Herr Binzer. "You are right there. The castle is not mortgaged, that is true, but if it doesn't belong to you, to whom does it belong then?"

"It did belong to me, but I presented it to a friend. I gave it to him so that he would remain in my service."

"I understand," said Herr Binzer with a grin.

"No, you do not understand, Herr Binzer. My friend would not otherwise have remained in my service, because I would not have let him waste his time in such a thankless manner. The Castle of Punta Hermosa belongs to Señor Paqueno here."

Herr Binzer turned abruptly to Señor Paqueno and looked at him with newly awakened interest.

"Really?" said he. "And what do you say to my proposition? Will you sell the place?"

ALL the accumulated emotion which slowly had been arising within old Señor Esteban now broke loose. He jumped up from his chair, and as he looked at Herr Binzer of Frankfort with the keenest disgust he said hoarsely:

"What do I say? Señor, how dare you come here and insult us with your offers? Sell? Never as long as I live—and to you? I would rather see Punta Hermosa lie in ashes—"

He stopped short at a sudden motion from Don Ramón, who waited until he had quieted down before saying to Herr Binzer:

"Señor Paqueno is somewhat unaccustomed to affairs of this kind, Herr Binzer. In any case, you understand now that the castle is not for sale. I regret, Herr Binzer, that we must bring this conference to a close. It has been very kind of you to look us up, wishing to improve our deplorable condition. But you are wasting your time and—forgive me—mine, as well! You probably are a busy man, and although my position does not entail much work, still I have quite a little to do."

He rose from his chair, to let Herr Binzer know that the audience was at an end; but without paying attention to this, the indefatigable man of business cried:

"A hundred and fifty thousand then, in Heaven's name! A hundred and fifty—yes, let us say a hundred and seventy-five! Do like Castro, take my hundred and seventy-five and what you can lay hold of besides, leave here and—"

"And begin life anew, you mean, Herr Binzer?" said the Grand Duke dryly. "Thanks. If the advice had come from any one else, he would have been horsewhipped. Now, may I beg you to leave without annoying us further?"

He laid a hand of iron on the German's round shoulder and quietly but firmly pushed him toward the door, while the six-figured sums, as they flowed over Herr Binzer's lips, kept growing higher and higher the nearer he and Don Ramón came to the threshold. As they reached it, Herr Binzer was up to three hundred thousand, and the Grand Duke turned around as he felt a pull at his sleeve. Old Señor Paqueno stood there beside him, making the wildest of grimaces while his lips unceasingly, kept forming the words:

"Three hundred thousand—Semjon Marcowitz—your Highness, sell!"

Don Ramón gave a start. During his conversation with Herr Binzer he had forgotten the sword of Damocles hanging over him, which Señor Esteban now brought back to his mind. Now once more his position stood clear before him, and for a moment he hesitated. Señor Paqueno was right: three hundred thousand was enough to pay Semjon Marcowitz and again become a creditable member of society! If he accepted . . . It would be a difficult matter to raise the money elsewhere, perhaps impossible. For half a minute he hesitated with his hand on Herr Binzer's shoulder, during which time that gentleman looked at him in tense and expectant silence; his eyes blinked behind his rimless glasses and there was a continual twitching around the corners of his mouth. Suddenly a smile came over the Grand Duke's face; he drew Herr Binzer back into the room and motioned to him to sit down. Old Señor Paqueno drew a deep sigh of relief and sank heavily into a chair.

There was deep silence in the room for several moments while the Grand Duke looked thoughtfully at Herr Binzer. Then he said:

"Herr Binzer, do you realize what Punta Hermosa means to Señor Paqueno and me? That castle—Don Jerónimo the Lucky's castle—and the land around it, is our place of retreat, Herr Binzer, an additional exit from their lair for two poor hard-pressed foxes. Now, if we are forced into national bankruptcy, abdication, and so forth, we will still have Punta Hermosa as a place of retreat, Herr Binzer. And likewise in case we get tired of keeping affairs going, which, strange to say, has not happened yet."

The Grand Duke stretched his hand across the table to Señor Paqueno, who emotionally kissed it. It was with a decidedly increased feeling of respect that Herr Binzer of Frankfort looked at him as he asked:

"Well, what are you driving at?"

"YOU now know, Herr Binzer, what value we place on Punta Hermosa. Do you know what its real value is? I had it impartially appraised after it was redeemed from Apelman. The highest estimated value was a hundred and twenty-five thousand pesetas. That was fifteen years ago. Let us say a hundred and fifty thousand at present on account of the change in money values. Well, Herr Binzer, you, a smart business man from America, offer three hundred thousand—"

Herr Binzer, who without asking permission had lit a cigar, hastily put it down.

"Three hundred thousand," said he. "Yes, but you must admit I did not have time for due deliberation—you were using force, you know. I bid a hundred thousand to begin with. I—"

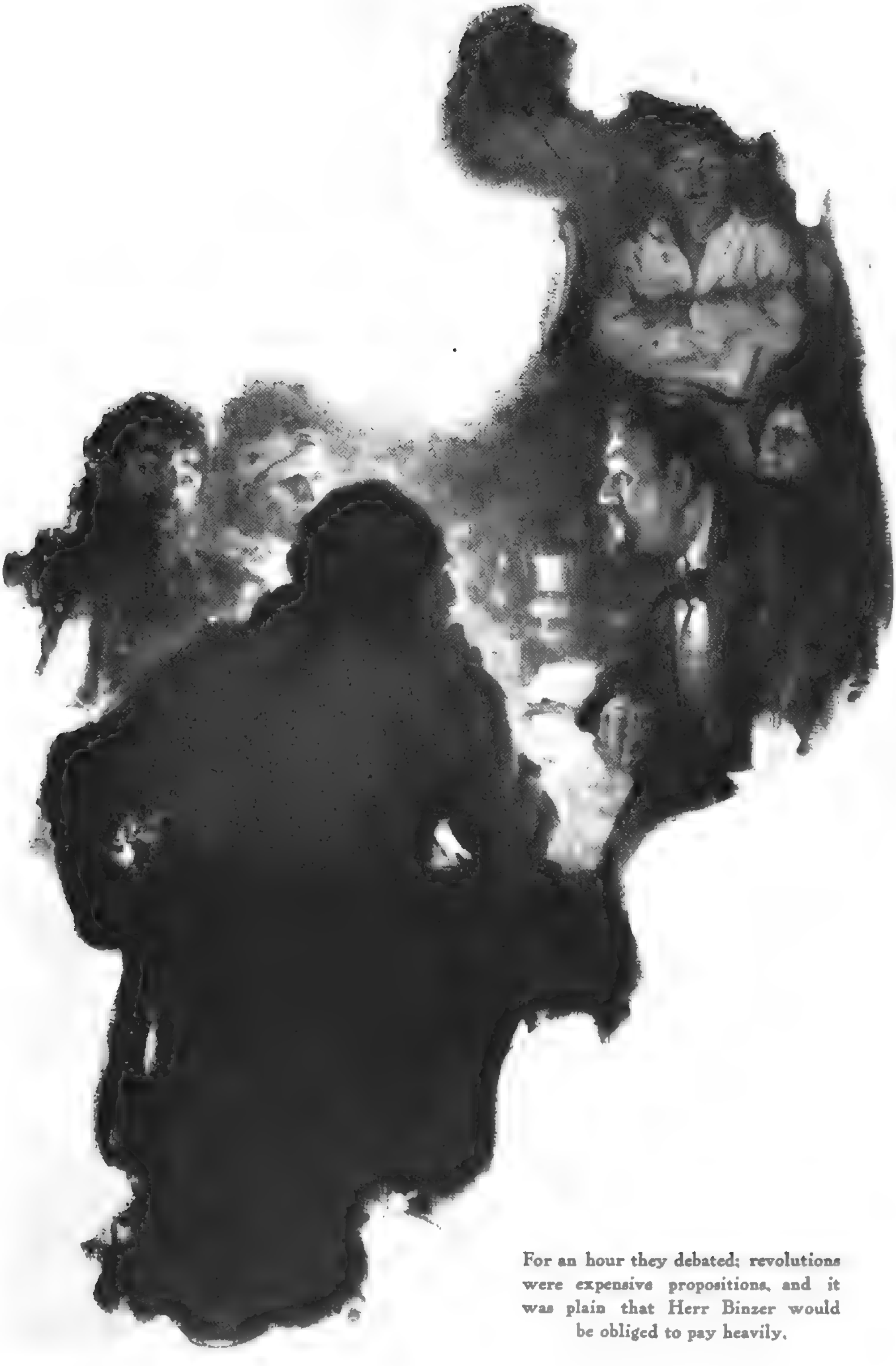
The Grand Duke arose from his chair. There was a shadow of a smile around the corners of his mouth.

"Then you withdraw your offer, Herr Binzer," said he. "Probably you did not intend buying the property at all. I regret for the moment I thought you were in earnest. I wish you a good morning."

He took a couple of steps forward as though to conduct Herr Binzer to the door. A sudden expression of fright came over this gentleman's features.

"Your Highness," said he hastily, "you misunderstand me absolutely. If I was joking, it was just now when I spoke about undue haste and the use of force. Of course, it is possible that the property is not worth more than a hundred and fifty thousand as you say, but *zum Teufel!* I have taken a liking to it, a charming situation, and it is worth three hundred thousand to me. I am rich, and a few banknotes more or less— I keep to my offer."

With an expression of tense expectation on his face, he looked at the Grand Duke, whose features were inscrutable as he answered:



For an hour they debated; revolutions were expensive propositions, and it was plain that Herr Binzer would be obliged to pay heavily.

"Forgive me, Herr Binzer, I see that you are a serious business man and that it is very possible Punta Hermosa is worth three hundred thousand to you. For the reasons I have just mentioned, the property is worth much more than three hundred thousand to Señor Paqueno and me. If we would sell it, the lowest price would be, not three hundred thousand, but half a million."

The German's features became a study of human passions. His small, peering eyes, as though bewitched, were glued on Don Ramón's cold face, his fat fingers were crumpling up the cloth under the table, while the corners of his mouth kept twitching unceasingly, now from disappointment and rage, now from indecision, now from momentary resolution. One minute it seemed as though he wanted to spring to his feet with a cold, scornful laugh at the Grand Duke's impudence; the next moment other ideas seemed to have entered his head and he was on the point of saying yes, when he would again appear to think it over and would stare at the Grand Duke with baffled rage.

Suddenly the Grand Duke made a little movement as though to rise, and lifted his eyebrows as much as to say: "I knew, of course, that the price would be too high for you!" At the same moment Herr Binzer's face hardened with an expression of determination. He cleared his throat, and with an ill-assumed air of superiority said:

"Well, really, you are a hard one to deal with! Half a million—that is no trifle. Do you think you can fleece the first honest person who for a long while has wanted to do business with you? I'll give you your half a million for the castle! What do you say to that, eh? That shows you how much I'm in love with your island, eh?"

The Grand Duke threw himself back in his chair, shaking with laughter until the floor trembled under his heavy body. Herr Binzer of Frankfort stared at him in fright, evidently convinced that he was in the presence of a maniac—that the man had lost his senses from too much happiness. He seemed on the point of hurriedly withdrawing his too hasty promise, but before he was able to utter a word the Grand Duke stopped laughing and, turning to the liberal German, said in a serious tone:

"Perhaps I can guess why you are so liberal. Didn't you dabble a bit in all sorts of things while in America—among others, in mines? Just try to remember; perhaps you may have discovered something at Punta Hermosa on one of your little outings?"

Herr Binzer quickly turned pale, but still made a last attempt to keep up his former tone.

"What in the devil!" he began; then he suddenly stopped. The Grand Duke had risen, and looked at him in a manner which filled his soul with terror.

"HERR BINZER," said he coldly, "kindly lay aside that tone immediately; it may be suitable in Mexico, but not at all in Minorca. Let me draw your attention to the fact that people here call me 'Your Highness' and that I am absolute monarch on this island. Do you understand? Absolute. The sole member of the firm, as you condescended to remark. I am a mild tyrant, but if it pleases me, within ten minutes I can put you over the border—without a boat, Herr Binzer—or throw you into prison for grossly insulting the head of the state. Our dungeons are rather the worse for age, but they could still serve for the rest of your lifetime."

"Just dare it," began Herr Binzer, but quickly changed. "Y-you m-mustn't—dare to do that, your Highness."

The Grand Duke smiled graciously.

Herr Binzer's face was worthy of a study by Forain. He gave a sigh. There was only one thing to do, to get the best terms he could.

"Well," said he heavily, "it is perhaps as you—as your Highness says. That is to say, I believe I discovered a small deposit at Punta Hermosa. I made a few investigations there—just superficial, far from decisive—"

"You are entirely too modest, Herr Binzer! And?"

"I was greatly disappointed. I had expected to find silver—silver has always been my specialty, your Highness."

"You are to be envied. I wish I could only say the same about myself."

"However, instead of silver I found sulphur, a very little sulphur."

"Sulphur! Herr Binzer! Fire and brimstone! I can understand you were surprised.

Naturally you didn't expect to find a place containing those articles for a long time to come!"

"Well, your Highness must understand that it is far from certain. There may be a slight deposit. But if there should be a worth-while amount, I could work it in a businesslike way."

Without showing surprise, Don Ramón said: "Have you ever been in Sicily, Herr Binzer?"

"No."

"But I have, Herr Binzer, and I had the pleasure of seeing the sulphur mines there working at full blast. It was carried on in a way which I believe you would consider absolutely businesslike. Labor was cheap there, too—very cheap. There were workmen by the thousand—men, women and children. Their bodies, like their souls, were blighted and poisoned by the sulphur fumes—they have their hell with all its ingredients here on earth, Herr Binzer, and if we can believe our religion, another one awaited them later, for they all defied authority, led lives of debauchery, and would steal whenever the opportunity arose. But the whole affair was certainly run in what you would call a businesslike manner, and the profits were all you could wish."

Herr Binzer looked at the Grand Duke with a sly smile.

"Your Highness is sentimental," said he. "Your Highness thinks twenty per cent too little to wink at the small inconveniences of having sulphur mines on the property? Well, I'm not unreasonable—let us say twenty-five, but not a pfennig more, as true as my name is Binzer, not a pf—"

The recollections that Herr Binzer of Frankfort had of what followed immediately after these words were extremely confused. Without his knowing how it had happened, two hands strong as iron came booming against his closely cropped head; everything seemed to go around. The next moment with the speed of a cannon ball he flew out through a door, and hit the stone-paved floor in the hall with a thud. A servant came hurrying from a room beyond and looked at his master questioningly.

"Help that gentleman out, Auguste," said the Grand Duke, pointing to Herr Binzer. "If he dares to show himself in the vicinity of the castle, you have full permission to take a shot at him. You can tell the other servants that the same orders serve for them, too. See that he leaves here immediately."

The Grand Duke nodded to Auguste, and retired to the dining-room with Señor Paqueno.

HERR BINZER of Frankfort was a man without refinement, but with a large and unquenchable thirst for money, intentionally insolent when he dared, guardedly so when he thought he could not employ his usual uncouth methods. Punta Hermosa was a find, unless his keen scent had led him astray. The tests he had made showed a high percentage of sulphur, and the amount of raw material was enormous; labor in Minorca was as cheap as a person could wish, and the location excellent; there would be no cost for railway transportation and the location was within reach of a dozen freight lines. In a word, it was a tremendously big affair—which he had been on the point of getting for a paltry three hundred thousand pesetas! Time after time on arriving at this point in his reflections, Herr Binzer would call down the vilest of curses on the head of Don Ramón. The tricky scoundrel! Robbing him of his own innermost secrets and then backing out of the bargain under the pretext of such idiotic nonsense as the welfare of the laborers! By the time he had reached the Plazuela de San Cristobal his head was cool once more; he thrust aside until later his disappointment and thoughts of revenge, and set his brain to work on but one thing: how he could save Punta Hermosa for himself.

It must be admitted that the problem seemed incapable of solution. As long as Don Ramón ruled over Minorca Herr Binzer did not stand many chances! Damn—Herr Binzer gave a start, forgetting to finish his oath; of course, that was the idea he had been looking for! As long as Don Ramón continued to reign there was no chance for Herr Binzer to get Punta Hermosa. What remained for Herr Binzer to do then if he still wanted to have Punta Hermosa?

Answering the question with a mysterious ejaculation, Herr Binzer entered the hotel, ate lunch and retired to his room. After half an hour's scheming by himself, he sent for Señor Luis Hernandez.

Señor Luis found the German seated listlessly in the only easy-chair in the room, a cigar hanging from the corner of his mouth, and his hands buried in the pockets of his trousers. On the table by his side lay a check book and a big pile of gold coins which made Luis's eyes open wide. As the young Minorcan came in, Herr Binzer arose from his chair and mumbled a good day, which, coming as it did from him, must be considered unusually polite. Luis noted that his face was red and swollen.

"*Guten Tag*, Herr Binzer," answered Luis with a bow, proud that he could show his linguistic abilities.

"Why, that's so!" said Herr Binzer in his own language. "You speak German, don't you, Señor Hernandez?"

His piglike eyes regarded the young man before him. A Minorcan's name is never preceded by the title *señor* unless he happens to be the head of a family. Herr Binzer knew this, and a slight familiarity with the young man's ambitious, restless nature made him use the term advisedly. Luis Hernandez had reached maturity—he was now twenty-seven—with a vague impatience with the manner in which the affairs of the island were conducted. He longed for the progressive activity of the outer world, and he eagerly grasped those scattered bits of information which came to him. The flattery implied in the address made Luis blush slightly but he remained silent, perhaps conscious of the limited extent of his knowledge of German.

Herr Binzer noticed his hesitancy.

"Señor Hernandez," said he, "if it is the same to you, I prefer to speak Spanish. I have been abroad so long that I am beginning to forget my mother tongue. But it is interesting to see a young man like you, Señor Hernandez, who even on Minorca keeps in touch with the world at large!"

Luis swelled with pride.

"I try to, señor," said he. "But you are right, it is difficult here on Minorca."

"You are ambitious, Señor Hernandez? You want to get ahead, do you not? That is the impression I have formed of you," said Herr Binzer in the same polite, confidence-inspiring tone.

Luis became more animated.

"I have tried my whole life, señor," said he. "But what can a person do here on Minorca? It is impossible to do a single thing which was not already done two hundred years ago. Everything is impossible on Minorca, señor, because it is Minorca."

"Then, Señor Hernandez," said Herr Binzer slowly, "there is nothing left to do but leave Minorca or change it!"

Luis laughed bitterly.

"Change Minorca! You are joking, señor. On Minorca nothing changes; the houses, farming, everything else is the same now as it was five hundred years ago. Nothing changes on Minorca, and least of all, Minorca itself."

"YOU are mistaken," said the wily Binzer earnestly. "Something must have changed on Minorca when young men such as you are to be found here. Who knows what you can do to improve conditions on your island?"

The expression on Luis's face became still more animated.

"Señor," said he in self-satisfied tone, "I am not stupid—that I know—and I will not deny that I have thought exactly as you do. But tell me, señor, what can I do?"

"If you are the only one who thinks that way," said Herr Binzer, looking at the young man intently, "there is not much you can do."

"But I have friends, señor, and not so few who think the same as I. You may be sure that we have thought out many plans which would improve conditions here. But we have the multitude against us and the people are apathetic. You see, señor, these are two circumstances which can be overcome only by one of two means, power or money. But if money is at one's disposal it is not a difficult matter to procure power."

Herr Binzer cleared his throat and said slowly:

"I am becoming more and more interested in you, Señor Hernandez. You are the first congenial person I have met here. You are very clever for your age, very clever. I am very glad, Señor Hernandez, very glad to hear you say you are not the only one with such ideas. Power and money, you say. Yes, that is true enough. But would it need so very much money to put your plans into execution? I—"

Luis quickly interrupted him. The word "money," which now had been repeated several times, carried his mind back to his favorite subject of thought, and at the same time awakened his caution.

"Señor," said he, in a dignified tone, "I must have expressed myself stupidly. We have no plans which we think of putting in operation. We have only discussed matters in a general way."

Herr Binzer returned his glance for a few seconds, and then said:

"Of course, señor, of course. That was what I meant. Let us in a very general way discuss the possibility of arousing Minorca. You believe it depends on money. Well—if you got money, what would you do then?"

As though sunk in thought, he moved his check book a little nearer and gave the pile of gold on the table a push so that it clinked. With half-closed eyelids he watched Luis. The young Minorcan had turned his head to one side to conceal the struggle which was going on within him, the struggle between greed for money and caution. Suddenly his eyes met Herr Binzer's; a grin flew over his swarthy face and he said:

"It is best to be straightforward, señor. You ask what we would do if we had money; I will tell you. Everything! Discontent has piled up and it is only necessary to take advantage of it. But why do you ask, señor? Would you perhaps like to invest some money in our little enterprise?"

It was Herr Binzer's turn to lower his eyes in embarrassment. Luis continued boldly without giving him time to reflect.

"Don't be disconcerted, señor! I am not stupid and I understand well enough that you yourself are after something!"

Herr Binzer's hesitancy quickly came to an end. To feel his way, like a cat circling around a dish of hot porridge, did not suit him in the least; he preferred simple and brutal methods. He answered curtly:

"Exactly, señor. It is best to be straightforward. I could tell you I want to help free your country of its yoke of oppression—I do, too, of course, but it is because by chance it suits my own interests. I have something in view which would put new life into the people and give you all both work and money. Your crazy form of government is the cause of all your misfortunes. If it is this you and your friends wish to change, perhaps I can help you out with some money. But change it thoroughly, señor! Is that what you want? And are you capable of carrying it through?"

Luis looked at him earnestly.

"Señor," said he, "if we were to succeed in bringing about such a change as you mention, what advantage would *we* reap from it?"

"WHY, Hernandez, weren't you just speaking of the big plans you thought of putting in operation if affairs on Minorca were only different? I am perhaps disposed to give you the means of changing conditions here. After that you have the field free for yourself."

Luis did not allow himself to be swayed by Herr Binzer's eloquence.

"That is possible," said he coldly, "but I am sure that the field would be even freer for you and you would reap far greater advantage from the change than we. I am afraid that we would only be pulling the chestnuts out of the fire for you."

"Well, let us say the others might." Herr Binzer's voice was masterly in its insinuating craftiness. "All cannot earn a like amount, Hernandez. Coöperative affairs have never been to my taste. There must be a leader—*you*, in other words; and as such you would receive your share of the large profits."

Luis looked at him with his sharp black eyes.

"What you say is very sensible, señor," said he, "but you have not mentioned what the little business is you have in view and from which I, as leader, would share the profits with you."

Herr Binzer's bushy white eyebrows arose threateningly and his cheeks became still redder than before. Was this booby here trying to play the same trick the Grand Duke had played that morning? *Verflucht nochmal*, he would put a quick stop to this. To be robbed of his secret once during the day was enough.

"My dear fellow," said he, scarcely controlling his anger, "let me tell you something once for all; don't try to ask any questions about what I have in view unless you want a quick end to my help. That is my own private affair, understand, until you have carried out your part of the program. I will only say it is an undertaking which will be of benefit to the whole island—most of all to us two, you and me. You must content yourself with that bit of information for the present, with that certainty, and if you don't care to, I will look around for some one who is more sensible than you. And that would be a pity, *nicht wahr?* Why, you are as though born to a president's uniform."

Luis blushed, but there was a doubtful expression on his face.

"AN UNDERTAKING which will benefit the whole island," said he. "Only that seems too peculiar, señor. Why should you need to overthrow the government in such a case? We haven't many undertakings here which give profit to any one; and if you have found anything of that kind, I am sure that the cripple up there at the palace would be beside himself with joy. It seems to me your air of secrecy is unnecessary. It makes me uneasy, señor."

Herr Binzer looked at him quickly; then he leaned forward and buttonholed him.

"Listen to me," said he. "You are clever enough to understand what I say. It is just because your damned Duke is in such a state that I come to you. He would want to have all the profit himself—you can well understand that—and besides, the man is crazy! I went up to see him today, told him what my plans were and offered him reasonable terms. Do you know what he said? That he preferred to get his money as he does now and that he doesn't give a damn for the people—they are best off as they are at present; and he said so time and time again. Don't forget to tell your friends about that! Well, Hernandez, what do you think of such a regent?" Herr Binzer's voice trembled with rage. "But I will settle accounts with the scoundrel! I will—and either with your help or another's. *Teufel hol' mich*, I have enough money to buy up your whole scrap-heap of an island and destroy your government ten times over, and I don't have to look for people to help me, if that is what you are thinking. But I'll keep my secret to myself, understand, and now I want an immediate and definite answer from you!"

Herr Binzer looked at Luis with flashing eyes, once more beside himself at recollection of that confounded Grand Duke's behavior. Luis quickly thought the matter over. To follow blindly a foreigner did not appeal to him in the least; but on the other hand, he himself had everything to win by the move—gold, honor and position. If he said no, the German could easily get some one else, there was no doubt about that. His mind was made up.

"Well, señor," said he, "I am your man. We will have a hard bit of work, señor. The people are very thick-headed in their respect for their sovereign. But if you will give me free rein and enough money, I swear that we will succeed soon enough. But money is the most important thing, señor!"

He cast a look full of meaning at the check book and gold by Herr Binzer's side, a look of mingled yearning and respect. But Herr Binzer said curtly:

"The most important! For you perhaps, Luis. If things are that way, I am afraid we can have nothing to do with each other. I know well enough that money is needed for a revolution, but before you give me some definite plan of what you think of doing, I will not lay out a single peseta. Or perhaps you already have your plans prepared?"

"Partly, señor. I have already mentioned that my friends and I have made many plans which have simply stranded through the lack of ready cash. I mean to consult with them immediately, and it will not be long before I can tell you the result, señor."

"Very well," said he. "Talk the matter over with your friends and come to me later. I will give you only one bit of advice: the sooner you are ready, the better. If you have a plan that'll do, then there is money enough here"—he nodded toward the table—"and the means of protecting it, too." The barrel of a revolver quickly peeped out from his right hip pocket.

Herr Binzer's manner, which in the beginning of the conversation had been the height of consideration and politeness, had hastily become curt and domineering. Señor Hernandez had become Hernandez and then Luis. Now that he understood his man he evidently considered all circumlocution unnecessary. Luis did not appear to be especially flattered at this change, and seemed on the point of protesting; but after a moment's hesitation he bowed politely, murmuring, "As quickly as possible, señor!" and disappeared. Herr Binzer turned the key in the door after him; a moment later Luis heard the click of another lock from his room. Evidently he was locking up his gold.

HERR BINZER was awaiting Luis in the Plazuela de San Cristobal. It had been dark for the last couple of hours, for in those latitudes night follows quickly on day. In February, as early as five o'clock the heavens seemed like blue-white porcelain in the moonlight.

"It's a good thing the moon is shining," said Luis, and bowed deeply to his employer. "This way, señor."

He started off and Herr Binzer, as self-confident as ever, followed him, puffing at a cigar. The way led to the oldest part of Port Mahon, which from the north side of the harbor rose up to the foot of the old fortress. The streets were hardly more than three feet broad; the houses had gaping black doorways where in the moonlight one could see the lower steep flights leading to the upper floors.

Two minutes later he opened the door to a low, white-painted house which seemed as empty and dead as the streets through which they had just come. It stood by itself in a little garden, where the moonlight glistened on a couple of lemon trees with their greenish-yellow fruit, and on some cabbages which in the dim light resembled so many severed human heads. On reaching the entry hall, Luis turned off to the left through a stone-paved corridor, on the left side of which were several small, numbered doors. Suddenly he stood before a broader door on the right, gave five knocks and whispered: "It is I, Luis Hernandez." Thereupon the door was opened from inside, and Herr Binzer and his companion stepped in.

They entered a long narrow room with whitewashed brick walls, at one end tapering into an apse-like recess. Around a table were grouped six people whom Herr Binzer could but indistinctly make out in the dim light. Three of them, however, quickly drew his attention. The first was a little grinning hunchback with spindle legs and a high bare forehead above his beardless face. He looked as though he might be forty, and strikingly resembled a tailor whom Herr Binzer remembered from his Hamburg days. He smiled obsequiously as Herr Binzer entered, his egg-shaped body cringing low in a deep bow. The second was a heavy, broad-shouldered man with a black beard which covered half his face and through which his teeth now and then glimmered like foaming whitecaps on a dark and murky sea. His glance was as cold and sullen as the hunchback's had been fawning and servile. Herr Binzer, who apprehended a bullying nature similar to his own, immediately conceived a hearty aversion to him—a feeling which almost turned into fear as he looked from him to his neighbor, a man still young, but with a face so pale and hollow that he seemed more like a dead than a living person. He was clad in black, and when through a sudden movement he came into the candle light, Herr Binzer noticed to his surprise that the black garment he wore was a monk's frock, shorn off at the knees.

Luis had shut the door and now took a step in the direction of his friends. Pointing to Herr Binzer with a theatrical gesture, he said:

"Comrades, I have the honor of presenting to you the noble friend through whom we can hope to see our plans soon realized, the tyrant overthrown, and poor Minorca set free. Comrades, this is Herr Binzer of Frankfort, who in America has already fought for the cause of liberty."

Luis, who spoke in his most eloquent manner, paused as though listening for some protest. Then he laid his hand on the hunchback's shoulder.

"Here," said he, turning to Herr Binzer, "is our friend Amadeo, who keeps a beerhouse down by the harbor, the *Comandante*, a resort you probably do not know. Amadeo, señor, is the real leader in his part of the town, and is invaluable, for through him we can keep in touch with all the lower classes in Port Mahon and win them over to our side."

HERR BINZER nodded coldly; Amadeo drew back with a bow. Pointing to the man with the beard, Luis continued:

"This, Señor Binzer, is our friend Eugenio Posada, sergeant of the bodyguard. Señor Posada's family has been very badly treated by the authorities and he is full of zeal for our project. You can understand, señor, that the guard is of importance to us. Two hundred men are not many, but you must remember they are armed, and we cannot run the risk of having them against us, even if you supply us with weapons as you have promised!"

"All right, Luis, all right," said Herr Binzer curtly. "And the gentleman in the cutaway?"

"The gentleman in the cuta— Señor Binzer! That is the reverend Father Ignacio."

The hollow-eyed individual interrupted him.

"I am still a priest of the church," he said, "and I have refused to lay aside the cloth, as you see, although I have shortened it. The lambs among whom I continue to work, still listen to the voice of their true shepherd, especially in the country, señor. My lambs, señor, go where I wish them."

Father Ignacio looked at Herr Binzer intently. It was evident that he, as well as the others, now waited for him to declare himself. Herr Binzer took the stub of his cigar from his mouth and in his usual domineering tone outlined his plan to them.

When he finished, they looked at one another with suspicion; in spite of the German's glowing description of the benefits of a democracy it was quite evident that he was prompted by a selfish motive whose nature, since he kept it to himself, they could only guess. On the other hand, Herr Binzer quickly understood from their replies that they, too, were moved by a love of money as well as an ardor for Minorca. For an hour they debated; revolutions were expensive propositions, and Herr Binzer would be obliged to pay heavily. The sergeant of the guard, a purely mercenary person, it seemed, demanded one hundred thousand pesetas, a sum equal to that of the demands of all the others, and the German realized with ill-concealed anger that without the assistance of the guard, the revolution would fail.

Not until the terms had been decided on did Herr Binzer pull from his paper a document which he demanded they sign. Luis took the paper and read it aloud:

"We, the undersigned, realizing that the unendurable situation in which our beloved island of Minorca finds itself will not cease before the present form of government ceases, swear, one and all, to do our utmost to overthrow the government and to give ourselves no rest until a different order of affairs has been arranged. To the possessor of this contract, from whom we have received the money necessary to carry out our plans, we, as leaders of the movement for liberty, promise the castle of Punta Hermosa as security for the money advanced.

"Port of Mahon, 17 February, 1910."

Ten minutes later Herr Binzer strode out into the night, the signed document carefully tucked away in his pocket.

"WHAT is it, Crofton?"

"The old gentleman from Southport Avenue wishes to see you, sir."

Mr. Ernest Isaacs, London banker, of 27 Lombard Street, was not known for his especially good humor, above all when the Stock Exchange showed a downward tendency, but on hearing the message which Crofton brought him he gave a start of joy.

"Excellent! Excellent! Show him in at once, Crofton, and don't let me be disturbed for the present. You understand?"

Mr. Crofton, who on the contrary did not understand the matter at all, showed the fact plainly enough in every feature of his sanctimonious face. However, he went out slowly and shortly afterward ushered in the visitor. As he stood to one side a white-bearded gentleman with gold-rimmed glasses, clad in a rather soiled jacket and trousers with braiding down the sides, shambled in. His shoulders were stooped as if they bore all the cares of the universe, and his eyes looked as weary and distressed as if they beheld all the iniquities of the five continents. As Crofton closed the door, he sank heavily into a leather armchair while Mr. Isaacs, who had greeted the entrance with a burst of laughter, arose to shake his hand.

"Oh, you are too good, professor! The devil himself would not know you in that dress. You look even more venerable than old man Booth."

The old man silenced him with a wave of his hand.

"You are really very kind, Mr. Isaacs. Well, between ourselves, I have a certain amount of talent along this line. My profession, you know, demands that I be more or less adept in it. My get-up today is one of my simplest; it is the same I wore when I arrested Kenyon the detective with a warrant for my arrest. Do you remember?"

Did Mr. Isaacs remember! Could any one who had followed the adventures of the famous detective Collin in the rôle of the Professor Pelotard, forget the Kenyon affair? But the expression of amusement on Isaacs's face quickly changed to one of tenseness.

"Well, how did you get along? Tell me immediately, professor. Have you got them?"

"How did I get along! Why, Mr. Isaacs, you are not very courteous. If you have your check book handy, a draft for six thousand pounds would suit me very well."

Mr. Isaacs gave a nervous laugh of relief.

"Oh, professor, you are a wonderful man! Sit down and tell me about it. How did you manage it? Have you really got them?"

Philip Collin nonchalantly drew a package of letters from his pocket and tossed them over to Mr. Isaacs.

"I hope they are all there," said he. "Anyway, you have nothing to fear from Mr. Hornstein. I followed him myself to the night express from Charing Cross last evening and made sure that he left for Paris."

"Left? What do you mean? For Paris?"

"Yes, never to return to England. That is to say, unless he wishes to have Dartmoor as his address."

"You more than astonish me, professor. But tell me, how did you recover the letters?"

Collin smilingly shook his head. "This much I will tell you, but the rest—never."

He settled in his chair and lighted one of Mr. Isaacs's cigars.

"Four days ago you called me to you and proposed that I recover certain letters, written by you to a Mrs. Daisy Bell, and in the possession of one Hornstein. Threats to make the letters public and thereby ruin your chances as a leader of Parliament, together with certain stipulated sums as—er—blackmail, came to you from the gentleman in question. You delegated me, offering me six thousand pounds for the return of the letters. Here are the letters; Hornstein, or rather Semjon Marcowitz, for that is his real name, has left England, as I said, never to return."

"But why?" Mr. Isaacs bent forward, consumed with curiosity.

"Certain papers that I discovered in his safe showed him to be a German spy in the commission of Germany since 1905. He will not come back for fear of being exposed."

*Everybody's Magazine, October, 1924*

"You are a great man, professor," said Mr. Isaacs. "I am liberal-minded and will say nothing, but you could be a big man in other ways—"

Philip interrupted him with a movement of his hand.

"*Tous les genres sont bons*," said he, "*hors les genres ennuyeux*. All ways are good except those that are tiresome. I have something else that I would like to talk over with you, Mr. Isaacs."

MR. ISAACS answered by pulling his chair nearer. He did not even look at the clock; it was as great a compliment as possible from a man who was more occupied than most of his class in London and whose word on the Exchange controlled the fortunes of thousands.

"Have you answered that letter you showed me when I was last here, Mr. Isaacs? The letter from Minorca?"

"Minorca? Ah, about the olives. Why, yes, certainly I have answered it."

"Then you are not interested? May I read it again?"

"Of course." Mr. Isaacs took a letter from his files and handed it to the professor. Musingly, he read:

MR. ERNEST ISAACS, Banker,
27 Lombard Street,
London, England.

Dear Sir:

Although unacquainted with your esteemed firm, I turn to you privately in an affair which should be of interest to you as a man of finance . . . can be seen from the accompanying tables that our olive crops show an increasing yield year by year.

As you will perceive, the yearly returns at present are estimated at 125,000 pesetas . . . on behalf of the Grand Ducal Ministry of Finance make you the following proposition . . . to grant us a loan of 600,000 pesetas, either to be made directly by your banking firm or to be underwritten by you . . . to run for a period of thirty years with interest at eight and one-half per cent plus, as administration fee to you, a third of the tax receipts each year from the said olive industry. . . .

"H'm! Well, it doesn't matter. What was it, Mr. Isaacs? Was it simply the fear of bad company spoiling your good reputation that kept you out of the enterprise?"

"Principally. Besides, I did not know about the security. The figures from the *Grand Ducal Statistical Bureau* might easily have been adjusted to fit the case—I have had something to do with government loans before. But it is very possible they were correct and that the security was good. Several questionable money-lenders, I believe, do an excellent business with Minorca—even clearing thirty and forty per cent on their money. But it is for just that reason a person can't go into an affair of that kind. People here in England are so refined in their feelings. One should hardly lend money to Portugal, to say nothing about China. A man in a position such as mine must think of public opinion as much as per cent. Business with Minorca would ruin his reputation if not his financial standing."

Philip Collin looked at Mr. Isaacs with a long glance from his intelligent black eyes.

"If," said he softly and with emphasis on each word, "if he himself appeared in the transaction! You surely have not thought about that, Mr. Isaacs!"

Mr. Isaacs gave a start, and stared at his guest.

"By Jove!" said the financier. "Do I understand you correctly? You mean through you I should lend the money to Minorca on the olives?"

"No," said Philip Collin quickly, "I mean that through me you should buy up the entire government indebtedness of the Grand Duchy of Minorca!"

PHILIP looked at the astounded man with a quiet smile. At last the banker found his tongue, and said:

"Buy— Professor, are you crazy or are you making fun of me? Or didn't I hear correctly? What was it you said I should do?"

"Mr. Isaacs, I assure you I am neither crazy nor impudent enough to make sport of you; and what I said was: you through me should buy up the entire government indebtedness of the Grand Duchy of Minorca!"

Mr. Isaacs looked at him with raised eyebrows and vehemently stroked his Mephistophelian beard.

"You are otherwise a clever fellow, professor. There must be some sort of method in your madness. Anyway, I will listen to you. Explain!"

Philip Collin bowed.

"There *is* method in my madness, Mr. Isaacs. I will show you immediately. Nobody before me has thought of cornering the market through Minorcan bonds. Many of the smaller money-lenders have sat back and reaped their harvest of varying percentage from them during many decades. Some have earned much, some little; some have probably lost, but all have stood in each other's way, and none have thought of transacting the affair on a big scale. And you also know, Mr. Isaacs, that this is the age of trusts and that the time for carrying matters on in a small way has passed.

"I have made use of the last few days to procure all the information I could about the Grand Duchy's affairs. Of course, I have not obtained all the details, but I have the most important. I will only mention the principal points as you already know some of them.

"The Grand Duchy of Minorca's indebtedness exists in the form of bonds issued at 200, 500 and 1000 pesetas, guaranteed by the state. If they have procured a loan of 600,000 pesetas they have then issued at least six hundred bonds with a face value of 1000 pesetas, usually a larger number of bonds and small denominations. The banks which have loaned the money demand some collateral—either real estate, a monopoly or tax or some industry. So far this is the normal procedure; now comes the outrageous part of the affair (apart from the rate of interest being at least seven and one-half per cent): In case that for even one year there should be a default in paying either the interest or instalment on the loan, the banks in their contract have expressly reserved the right to take over the management and supervision of the security; at the same time they have stipulated especial 'costs of administration' for running and keeping the collateral in good condition, and last but not least, these stipulations are to remain in force until all back interest, instalments and the interest on these have been paid! You can understand the outrageousness of it, Mr. Isaacs. They knew that all honorable bankers had the same viewpoint as yourself, Mr. Isaacs, and they knew better than any one else what position the Duchy was in. Consequently the banks thought out this disguised way of increasing the interest: as soon as there was a default in payment of interest and the instalments were not forthcoming they hurried to put their rights in force. They took over the management of whatever was pledged, and you may rest assured that the expenses, which they charged for this, did not fall below twenty per cent of the whole returns.

"Well, Mr. Isaacs, all that is not so very unusual. But I am coming to the ridiculous part of the affair. Do you know what those money sharks have done besides? They loan money to Minorca, never under seven and one-half per cent, and issue the bonds at a figure never higher than ninety. After a couple of years, when by chance there is some trouble in the payments, they take over the 'management' of the collateral, which, remember, is not considered as payment of any instalment or interest. Then those nice little bankers hit on the following idea!

"A payment, they say to themselves, of seven and one-half per cent every eighth year, means nothing for us. Let us put the Minorcan paper on the market. Then we will get back the money we loaned; the people who buy up the paper get the interest which comes in every eighth year, and we continue to manage the collateral and get our twenty to thirty per cent. In that way all parties are satisfied.

"So the bonds are listed on one or several exchanges, the public takes up the bonds willingly and everything goes according to the usurers' plans.

"I will admit one thing: this has been the case up to the last few years. Ever since the Parisian papers began to poke about in the Minorcan affairs the banks have hardly been so successful in disposing of the bonds, and therefore some of the Grand Duchy's obligations are still in the hands of the original lenders.

"But, Mr. Isaacs, now you understand what I am driving at. By what right do the banks 'manage' the pledges given as security and grow fat on the exorbitant rates of interest they receive? Solely as owners of the Grand Ducal debentures. But who possesses the debentures, Mr. Isaacs? The people, the common people, who paid over ninety per cent of the nominal value for them, and who are willing any day to sell them on the Exchange at forty-five and one-half—the latest quotation!"

PHILIP COLLIN had talked himself into a heat and looked at Mr. Isaacs with glowing eyes. The great financier rose from his chair and said seriously:

"By Allah! Professor, you are a great man, and I am your prophet!"

"And the poetic justice of it!" cried Mr. Collin. "Cheating the usurers! Relieving the common people of their burdensome investments and enriching ourselves!"

"But the details," interrupted Mr. Isaacs; "the details, professor!"

"The details? Here are all the figures I have gathered together during this last week; through them you can see in what position the Grand Duchy is, what the different loans are and with what bankers they are doing business.

"We will buy up the whole lot of the Minorcan government bonds. You take over the management of the pledges and become lord and master of the Duchy from one end to the other, and rich as Rothschild—together with me!"

"But you smile so queerly, professor," remarked Mr. Isaacs. "Are you holding something in reserve?"

Philip nodded with a little grin.

"Perhaps," said he. "Have you ever been to Monte Carlo, Mr. Isaacs?"

"You should know I have, since it was there I first met you."

"Public gambling," answered Philip Collin slowly, bowing his head, "is tolerated at present practically only in France and Monaco. In all other countries, the gambling situation is threatened, if it is allowed at all. At the present moment there is only one prince in Europe except the Czar, who offhand can grant a license for a new, really first-class gambling hell; and that prince, Mr. Isaacs, is the Grand Duke of Minorca!"

Philip stopped. Mr. Isaacs arose, giving vent to a whistle of amazement, and looked at his guest with thumbs in the armholes of his waistcoat.

"A corner in government bonds," said he, "and a new Monte Carlo held in reserve! By Jove! Professor, I have heard of less pretentious plans!"

He looked intently at his guest for a few moments. Then he asked: "Do you know what the total amount of Minorca's state indebtedness is?"

Philip Collin drew a paper from his pocket.

"When I give you the figures, you will realize how unjustly a person can acquire a bad reputation in financial matters. If my information is correct, the sum total of the Duchy's indebtedness is not over eighty-nine million pesetas. What does forty-five and one-half per cent of that amount come to, Mr. Isaacs? Hardly a million and three-quarters pounds, if you should want to make a clean sweep of it. But that isn't necessary unless you wish. Assuming that we only buy up seventy-five per cent of the entire indebtedness, you will be absolute master of the Minorcan government for one and a third million pounds. Have you never wished to experience the fascination of possessing unlimited power, Mr. Isaacs? Besides you would not even need risk £1,350,000; although I am only a poor, hard-up professor, I will contribute what I can."

"How much?" asked Mr. Isaacs smilingly.

Philip Collin fondled his newly acquired check.

"Ten thousand, at least," said he with a serious air. "But now let's examine my figures more closely!"

Mr. Isaacs sat down at his desk and began to go over them, at times stopping to give a long staring look at his strange guest, then for several minutes in succession adding up figures on a piece of paper. Professor Pelotard, who had sunk back in his leather chair with a tired air, smoked his cigar to an end and lit another. Outside could be heard the dull morning rumble of London. Suddenly the bells began ringing in a neighboring church, and Mr. Isaacs arose.

"I'll be damned, professor," said he slowly, "but I do believe you have found the golden egg as you said! We'll go into the details after the voting in my constituency. The election takes place tomorrow, as you know. Until then you have my promise that I will place £1,350,000 at your disposal on the day you have everything ready."

"One million three hundred and forty thousand," Philip Collin corrected. "You forgot my contribution."

The great financier laughed, and his white-haired guest disappeared through the baize doors with heavy step and bowed head.

IT WAS the fourth of March, 1910, half-past six in the evening, and a veil-like fog spread itself over Paris.

The shops were preparing to close and the lights on electric signs flashed up, disappeared, and flashed again in an eternal series of green, red and white rays. Outside the cafés, in spite of the chilly weather, sat devoted crowds of boulevard habitués indulging in their favorite absinthe or vermouth.

At one of the tables in front of the Café de la Paix sat a young man with an absinthe before him. His face was friendly, with short clipped black mustache and intelligent black eyes. His countenance wore a smile, expressing a certain amount of self-satisfaction; now and then he threw a quick glance at his papers and the smile deepened.

A bright red motorcar with blinding white lights suddenly swung around the corner from the Rue Auber, and with a quick turn drew in toward the curb. Long before it could come to a standstill the door flew open and somebody in a long automobile coat jumped out. The door slammed to and the red car, which had only lessened its speed a trifle, made another quick turn toward the Boulevard des Capucines, and disappeared, at its original violent pace, across the Place de l'Opéra.

Before the red motorcar had reached the Place de l'Opéra the person who had jumped from it had made a couple of hasty steps across the sidewalk toward the black-mustached man and without a second's hesitancy, sat down at his table. The next moment a little gloved hand lay on the sleeve of his coat and he felt a warm breath at his right ear. Then, as his senses seemed to return, he heard in a quick, hurried whisper:

"Save me, monsieur, if you are a gentleman. They were following me in my car—perhaps I have succeeded in putting them off the track. Act as though nothing—look as if I were with you—talk to me as though I were your—sweetheart. . . . Oh, God, there they are!"

As he followed the direction her glance took through her automobile veil, he saw a black motorcar suddenly spring into view at the corner. For a few moments, which suddenly seemed endless to him, it looked as though the car intended to stop; the white headlights, half turned toward the Boulevard des Capucines, gleamed coldly and defiantly; then it darted forward again in the tracks of the red car which was giving vent to shrill signaling honks from across the Place de l'Opéra. Involuntarily he drew a deep breath and turned hastily toward her in time to see her eyelids close and felt the grip on his arm suddenly loosen. Fearing that she would faint, he supported her with his left arm and beckoned to a waiter.

"Garçon!" cried the young man. "A glass of cognac for the young lady."

She shook her head and after a moment started to rise.

"No, thanks. I feel perfectly well now. I should like to go."

She instinctively made a movement toward her left arm as though to grasp her bag, but the next moment her eyes opened wide and her face turned a deep red. There was nothing on her left arm. If there was a bag it was evidently in the motorcar!

The young man quickly motioned to the waiter to go.

"Everything's all right," said he. "I'll call when I want you."

He turned to his unknown companion, who was evidently half stunned by her discovery, and smiled in an amused but respectful manner.

"Madame," said he, "your sortie from the motorcar did not give you time to think about any baggage. With your permission, I will consider it an honor for you to be my guest. Nothing would give me more pleasure, except the knowledge that this should not be the last time. And now let me know what else I can do for you."

She sat with lowered eyes.

"You are much too kind," said she shortly. "Unfortunately, you are right. I must have forgotten my bag in the machine."

Two eyelids slowly lifted over two moist deep-blue eyes. A tear still lay in the farthest corner, but it quickly melted like snow before the sunny, springlike smile which began to play over her face.

"You have been very good to me," she said quietly, stretching her hand across the table. "You have not doubted me for a moment. What prevented my being a criminal escaping from the police?"

He grasped the little hand; laughed gaily in answer to her smile and then became serious again.

"MADAME," said he, "forgive me for drawing attention to an unpleasant matter. Are you sure your enemies in the black motorcar will not return?"

She gave a start.

"But what may I do?" he asked. "I am absolutely at your disposal."

The voice behind the veil which she had pulled over her face at this reference to her pursuers was very hesitant and shy.

"I—I don't know. It isn't right for me to take up your time. Why, you do not know me—"

He leaned forward and looked at her seriously.

"*Voyons*," said he. "I thought we had come to an agreement on that point. I do not know who you are, and unless you wish it, I shall never know. But I know you are in distress and without money. My time stands absolutely at your disposal."

As he said this he involuntarily cast a look at the watch on his wrist. It was now after seven and therefore he had less than an hour and a half longer in Paris, if he did not wish to miss the night express on which he had reserved his sleeping compartment.

His unknown companion, who had been studying his face carefully through her veil, seemed to arrive at a sudden decision.

"If—if—but you surely have time to spare?"

He nodded quietly.

"Would—would you then be willing to take me to the Hôtel d'Ecosse?"

"Is that all!" He burst out laughing at the contrast between this simple request and the hesitant manner in which she made it, and stuffing his newspapers into his pocket, called a taxi.

Ten minutes later they arrived at her hotel.

"Madame," said he, "if you wish I will get out and reconnoiter. Don't be afraid; I will ask no questions about you, I give you my word. But as to your enemies—they may be waiting for you here. Will you give me some sort of description of them"—she clearly hesitated—"or will you let me use my own judgment in finding out what I can?"

She nodded thankfully and settled back in the corner of the motorcar. The young man jumped out and rushed into the foyer of the hotel.

In a couple of minutes he returned with a troubled look on his face.

"Well, madame," said he, "fortune seems against you. There are two gentlemen who just arrived in a black car and evidently are waiting for you in the foyer."

She turned pale as death and murmured:

"Two gentlemen—what do they look like?"

"One is tall, with face yellow as a lemon, except where it is covered by a black beard. He wears a sack suit. The other is small, fat, of muddy complexion, with blue eyes and a blue double-breasted coat."

Tears glimmered under her veil and in the ensuing silence he heard the sound of a slight, suppressed sob. He sprang into the car and laid his hand on her shoulder.

"Good God, child!" said he excitedly. "There, don't cry! What is it? What can I do for you?"

She slowly removed his hand from her shoulder and drew herself up.

"No, no," said she. "Leave me. You have already done more for me than you should. Perhaps I can never repay you. I know now I must appear to you like a criminal escaping from the police. But I swear I am not. Let me go now!"

She made a movement as though to get out but he quickly drew her back to the cushions of the car, shouted an address to the chauffeur and slammed the door. He turned to his companion with a question on his lips, but she forestalled him.

"How did you manage to find out those things at the hotel?" she asked anxiously.

"Through one of the bellboys and a five-franc piece," he answered, smiling. "I formerly lived in the hotel and gave rather good tips."

"Five francs more," she mumbled with a note of despair in her voice which made him laugh. "And they said that Jacques—that my car got away?"

"Yes," said he, with a most gloomy voice, "Jacques—your car got away."

In spite of her low spirits she burst out laughing at his melancholy tone.

"Jacques is only my chauffeur," said she, "who has rendered me more service than any one else—except you."

After a few moments' silence he turned to her.

"Madame," said he, and looked out to see how far they were from the address he had given, "will you give me straightforward answers to three questions?"

She nodded.

"In the first place," said he, "have you any friends in Paris to whom you might wish me to take you?"

She again turned pale and gloomily shook her head.

"No," said she in a low voice, "I am unknown. I am alone in Paris."

He became more and more mystified but continued in the same quiet tone:

"Secondly, is there any place outside of Paris where you would like me to take you?"

She hesitated a moment and then stammered:

"Y-yes, there is. I was thinking of going to Marseilles by the half-past eight train tonight."

"Then you have friends there?"

"N-no, not exactly—no."

HE STARED at her in dumb amazement. The eight-thirty train to Marseilles! His train! Truly, the workings of fate are strange! Why on earth did this young girl, whom people had been chasing by automobile around the boulevards of Paris, want to go to Marseilles, unless she had friends there? Was it to prevent her going there that they had followed her in the motorcar? He mastered his surprise as well as he could and continued:

"Thirdly, where do you think Monsieur Jacques will go if he makes good his escape?"

"Where will he go? That I don't know, but he knew that I thought of going to Marseilles tonight. I had ordered my ticket although I did not have the chance to get it, because I was followed. Of course he will look for me in Marseilles, as soon as he can—"

She stopped and nervously twisted the tips of her fingers together. Evidently the thought of the forgotten bag and her helpless position had again struck her. He had made up his mind. He turned to her and, filled with astonishment for giving way to the impulse which was driving him on, said:

"Madame, it is more than strange, but actually true, that I have ordered a sleeping compartment on the same express you intended to take. You have no friends here in Paris or the vicinity to whom I can take you, and you have reason to believe that Monsieur Jacques will seek you out in Marseilles. Therefore it is plainly my duty to take you to Marseilles and save you from your enemies. Will you entrust yourself to my protection?"

He hastily brought out a pocketbook and drew out a Cook's first-class ticket for Marseilles as well as one for the sleeping-car (entire compartment). She looked at them inquisitively and spelled out the name.

"Professor Pelotard, London," said she. "Oh, you are English! I might have known that, although you speak French like a native—"

"I live in London," said he simply, and resisted asking in return the question which burned on his tongue about her nationality. "Well, you have seen that I am speaking the truth. Will you accept my offer?"

She gazed into his eyes with a clear and quiet look.

"Yes," said she simply, "if you really care to show such wonderful chivalry to an unknown—" She evidently thought of continuing but he interrupted her:

"Thanks for your faith in me, madame. But then I must ask you one more question. Do you think your enemies are aware of your intentions of leaving?"

"Th-that is possible," she stammered. "I did not say anything about it at the hotel, but I packed up this afternoon before I went out with Jacques. Do you think—"

"I think it more than probable that they have people watching at the principal stations—that is, I suppose they have the means and courage to do so?"

He looked at her questioningly. She nodded in a somewhat haughty manner.

"Then there is only one thing left to do. You must assume a disguise, and quickly, too."

He stuck his head out of the window and whistled to the chauffeur. The car stopped.

"How long does it take from here to the Gare de Lyon?"

"A quarter of an hour."

"Won't do. You can have ten minutes."

"Impossible."

"You must."

The little chauffeur hesitated. "It will be at a good deal over the usual speed," he mumbled.

"It will be also a good deal over the usual price. Let us say four times the usual price, and I'll pay the fines if there are any."

The chauffeur brightened up.

"*Mais alors, naturellement, monsieur!*"

He wanted to start his motor going, but Philip Collin stopped him with a gesture.

"Wait until I call! I need five minutes here myself; you'll still have your ten minutes to get there."

While the chauffeur in amazement stopped the car again, Philip Collin quickly brought out a little traveling case from his inner pocket. The next moment, with a muttered, "You must forgive me, madame," he had loosened the blue veil from his companion's head and taken it off her hat. Then his long, slender fingers began to dance between the little traveling-case and her face. Silently and hastily, rouge, cream, powder and cosmetics were applied here and there. The light from an arc lamp fell in through the window of the automobile and in a glass beside her the young woman followed, with wide-open blue eyes, the change that took place in her appearance. What time would have needed at least twenty years to accomplish took not more than four minutes under Mr. Collin's fingers.

Without giving her time to admire his work, Collin murmured:

"Can you take off your automobile coat without catching cold? It would be far too easily recognized."

She nodded, smiled in a bewildered way, and took it off. Under it she wore a blue walking-suit. He quickly rolled up the coat and pushed it under the cushions.

"Fairly well done," he murmured, and looked at her critically. "Remember to walk as heavily as you can and lean on my arm. Do you speak English? Fine! Then I'll look out for the rest. All right, five minutes exactly."

He shouted to the chauffeur, the whirring motor suddenly let forth a shrill rasping shriek and the car shot forward with the speed of a cannon ball.

NINE minutes later, the chauffeur turned into an open square and stopped before the entrance to the Gare de Lyon.

Philip jumped out and motioned to his companion.

"Ethel dear," he cried with a typical American twang, "hurry, please, or we'll be late for the train."

A few seconds' quick walk along the platform and they found car number five of the night express. She climbed in heavily, assisted by Philip.

"Where do we go?" she asked.

"Here," said he, after looking at his ticket, and showed her into a coupé. "Look out again carefully; don't let the light fall directly on your face, and tell me if you see any one."

In obedience to his words, she bent forward and looked out. At the same moment, the last doors were closed. There was a jerk and the train slowly started to move. With her glance fixed on a point near the entrance to the platform she whispered:

"Thank goodness the danger is over. They are there but they didn't notice us. The one who was on the lookout for me has just left with a very disappointed air."

Without her noticing it, Philip had followed the direction of her glance and saw a tall, lanky man disappear at the end of the platform after he had cast a last look at the train as it rolled out. Philip gave a violent start. He could swear by everything in the world that he had seen that face somewhere before.

"Well, madame," said he, "so far everything has gone well. Let us hope our luck will continue. Now there's only one thing which I forgot to mention."

"What is that?" she asked, giving him a thankful smile.

"Your name. I haven't the honor of knowing what your name really is, but I do know the one you are to bear for the next twelve hours."

"And that is—"

"Madame Pelotard."

She jumped up and stared at him, her eyes filled with surprise and indignation. He shrugged his shoulders and smiled sarcastically in return.

"Since you are traveling on my ticket, yes," he said. "Thank goodness, I always reserve two compartments. And you may rest assured, madame, there are walls between them and the door can be locked."

Mr. Collin had seldom in his life been more astonished than during the hours which had passed since this young lady's appearance at the Café de la Paix. He could hardly tell why he should mix himself up in affairs which did not concern him in the least and take the trouble, for her sake, of fooling people who, if he could believe her, had both the desire and power to avenge themselves.

The girl herself not only avoided giving any information about herself, but had even requested him to abstain from all attempts to find out anything. As far as that went, it seemed to be in keeping with her character as she had shown it.

SHORTLY after they had taken their places in the dining-room of the Hôtel d'Angleterre in Marseilles for breakfast, Collin left her in order that he might insert a notice in the paper concerning her whereabouts. It was quite possible that Jacques, knowing of her plans of going to that city, might search the papers for a clue.

"How shall I sign the notice?" he had asked her.

"Oh, that is sufficient, he will understand."

Five minutes later when he returned he found her absorbed with the newspapers.

*Excelsior* or *Matin*, he thought; at the same moment he saw to his surprise what paper it was which had so captivated her. *The Sentinel of Finance*, by Jove! An English financial paper! Did the newfledged Madame Pelotard dabble in stocks? Before he had time to ask himself further questions she interrupted him. Knitting her eyebrows lightly, she said:

"Tell me, have you read this paper?"

"Yes, madame."

The paper was Mr. Ernest Isaacs' special medium.

"Will you explain one of the articles to me?"

"Gladly. Which one?"

He bent quickly over, feeling sure he would find her absorbed in one of the optimistic articles with which Mr. Isaacs' secretary, Mr. Bass, was accustomed to greet the birth of a new Isaacian company. He was so amazed when he saw where her little finger pointed that he came near collapsing.

"This article here," she said. "The one about the Minorcan bonds."

"By Jove! *By Jove!*"

What was there about Minorca to interest this young lady? Minorca! It was the day before yesterday that the biggest venture of his life had been launched, the same venture which a couple of weeks before he had proposed to Mr. Isaacs.

Two weeks had gone by in preparation for the coup. Mr. Isaacs' *Sentinel*, together with various friendly and subsidized organs in England and on the Continent, had at stated intervals published pessimistic articles about the condition of affairs in the Duchy of Minorca and the desired results were attained. The wish to sell had become general, almost approaching a panic the bonds had been dumped on the market, and last but not least, the quotations had been forced still lower, from 45½ to 43½.

The final pessimistic article, which appeared in all the allied papers, had the desired effect; the exchanges in Paris, Madrid and Rome had opened with an official quotation of 42½ and immediately after that the blow had fallen. The exchanges had hardly been open twenty minutes when eight-tenths of the national indebtedness of the Grand Duchy of Minorca had passed into new hands; half an hour later the wires had spread the news over the whole of Europe, and immediately afterward people throughout the world were asking the same question: What in heaven's name did it all mean? Buying up the Minorcan national indebtedness! Cornering the market with Minorcan government bonds!

And it was this article which now, to his indescribable amazement, excited the interest of his pretended wife.

Controlling his astonishment, he said:

"What do you wish me to explain? The article goes straight to the point."

"That is just it," she said impatiently. "Why should any one be a fool to buy Minorcan government bonds? Aren't they good?"

Philip suppressed his desire to laugh, and said:

"Excuse me, but what do you know about government bonds? And what do you know about Minorca?"

She seemed to hesitate and then said:

"When a country borrows money, the obligation is represented by government bonds, is it not? And why should Minorcan bonds be worse than ou—than others? I only know it lies in the Mediterranean and has a duke—Roland or something."

"Ramón XX, madame, who moreover is said to be a very pleasant person. So far you are perfectly right." As briefly as possible Collin gave an account of financial conditions in Minorca.

"But the Grand Duke—do you know anything about him?" she interrupted.

"Nothing special. He was born in 1875, the same year as I, is well educated, tall and stately, but unfortunately he limps."

"Limps? Oh, how I pity him! But handsome and stately, you said. I have also heard that. And thirty-five years old?"

"Yes, madame, thirty-five years old. You seem to be very much interested in Don Ramón?"

At first she seemed not to have heard him; then she impatiently shook her head.

"Not at all," she said. "Let's have breakfast, if you please. I am absolutely famished."

Philip bowed deeply, and cast an appealing glance to heaven.

THEY had just finished breakfast when an idea struck him.

"Madame," said he, "you are absolutely without baggage, and it may be some time before your Jacques arrives. We must go out and buy what you need for the present."

She brightened, then hesitated.

"Do you really mean it?" she said. "I—I need some clothes"—she gave an embarrassed look at herself in the glass opposite—"especially since I have grown so old."

It was on their way back from the shops on La Cannebière that she stopped him by laying her hand on his arm. With head stretched forward she stared at a newspaper kiosk opposite, the windows of which were filled with gaily colored advertisements and announcements.

"What is that there?" she said. "Can you see? Minorca—I think."

"Always Minorca," laughed Philip. "Will you tell me what could happen on Minorca!"

As though in answer to his laugh and his words, through the noise of the street there burst the hoarse cry of a newsboy.

"Mi-i-inorca!" he bawled. "Mi-i-inorca! Full details about the revolution in Minorca."

Shortly afterward Philip Collin sat in a lounge of the Hôtel d'Angleterre, holding in his trembling hands *Le Petit Marseillais*. His companion, silently and with staring eyes, had gone to her room; and he read for the hundredth time the article which suddenly had thrown him into the blackest depths. The headlines were as follows:

REVOLUTION ON MINORCA!—A Many-Century-Old Kingdom Falls—WHERE IS DON RAMÓN XX?—No Certainty About His Fate—The Worst Is Feared—Minorca a Republic!—Its Debts Repudiated!

The text was not less startling:

> Late this morning a telegram of such unusual purport was received from Barcelona that we immediately took steps to verify the report. It read as follows:
>
> Barcelona, 4 Mar., 1910, 2:50 P. M. The captain of the English freighter *Lone Star*, Blue Star Line, arrived here from Port Mahon (Minorca), reports under oath to the representative of the line as follows:
>
> "Arrived at Minorca, eleven A. M., to load cargo (olive oil) for London. Found the city in revolt; great excitement raging in the streets; people streaming this way and that; the cannons from the fortress thundering continuously. Almost hit by a shot. Went on land. On account of the general excitement difficult to obtain information. Certain that the populace on the whole island has arisen, that the grand-ducal castle has been stormed, and the castle flag torn down. The fate of the Grand Duke unknown or kept hidden from the people. As leader of the movement a certain Luis Hernandez is mentioned, as well as a Catholic priest. No signs of massacre. Was visited during the afternoon by said Hernandez; reported in broken English that Minorca had arisen and 'thrown off its burden of centuries'; refused to give information about the Grand Duke, declared that the island would become a republic with him as president, and above all repudiate the debts 'under which the island has groaned for hundreds of years.'"

Mr. Collin read on. The article went into a lengthy statement of the history and financial condition of the island, together with a reminder of the financial coup that had, but a short time before, aroused so much comment in the banking world. It ended with the words:

> Evidently no French capital worth mentioning is still interested in the island.

AT FIVE o'clock on the afternoon of March 6, 1910, Philip Collin passed through the Rue des Olives in the harbor section of Marseilles.

He went along with rapid steps, now and then casting a scrutinizing glance at the numbers on the houses. Reaching number 19, he rapped with the knocker, and a maid opened the door.

"Is Captain Dupont at home?"

"Who will I say is calling?"

"A gentleman who wishes to hire his yacht."

"Please step in, and I'll tell him."

Collin was shown into a little reception room, where he sat down in an American rocking-chair.

After a moment the door opened, and in came a thick-set, somewhat corpulent man with the rolling gait peculiar to sailors. He was almost completely bald, with a ruddy face, surrounded by a beard sprinkled with gray.

"Are you Captain Dupont?"

"I am."

"I've been told you own a yacht for rent. Do you make long trips?"

"Of course. Do you think I'm a coast-hugger?"

"So much the better. And your price per week?"

"Three hundred francs, not counting provisions and coal."

"That sounds reasonable. You go along yourself?"

"Always."

"Do you know the Balearic Islands?"

"Somewhat, having been there three times. But you don't mean—"

"Minorca? Yes, I mean Minorca."

"But a revolution has broken out there."

"You have heard about it? Yes, they say there is a revolution. I'm a journalist, and I'm interested in finding out whether they have lied. When can you start?"

"Day after tomorrow."

"Won't do. Tonight at the latest."

"Not very much time. I might say an unusually short time."

"Let us say five hundred fifty per week then, without provisions and you are to be ready at ten-thirty. I've been told your yacht is lying at the east pier."

"You've been told the truth. Who sent you here?"

"I tried to get passage with the Algiers Company's boat tomorrow, but I was told the Company's boats no longer touch at Minorca."

"I can well believe it. And they sent you to me?"

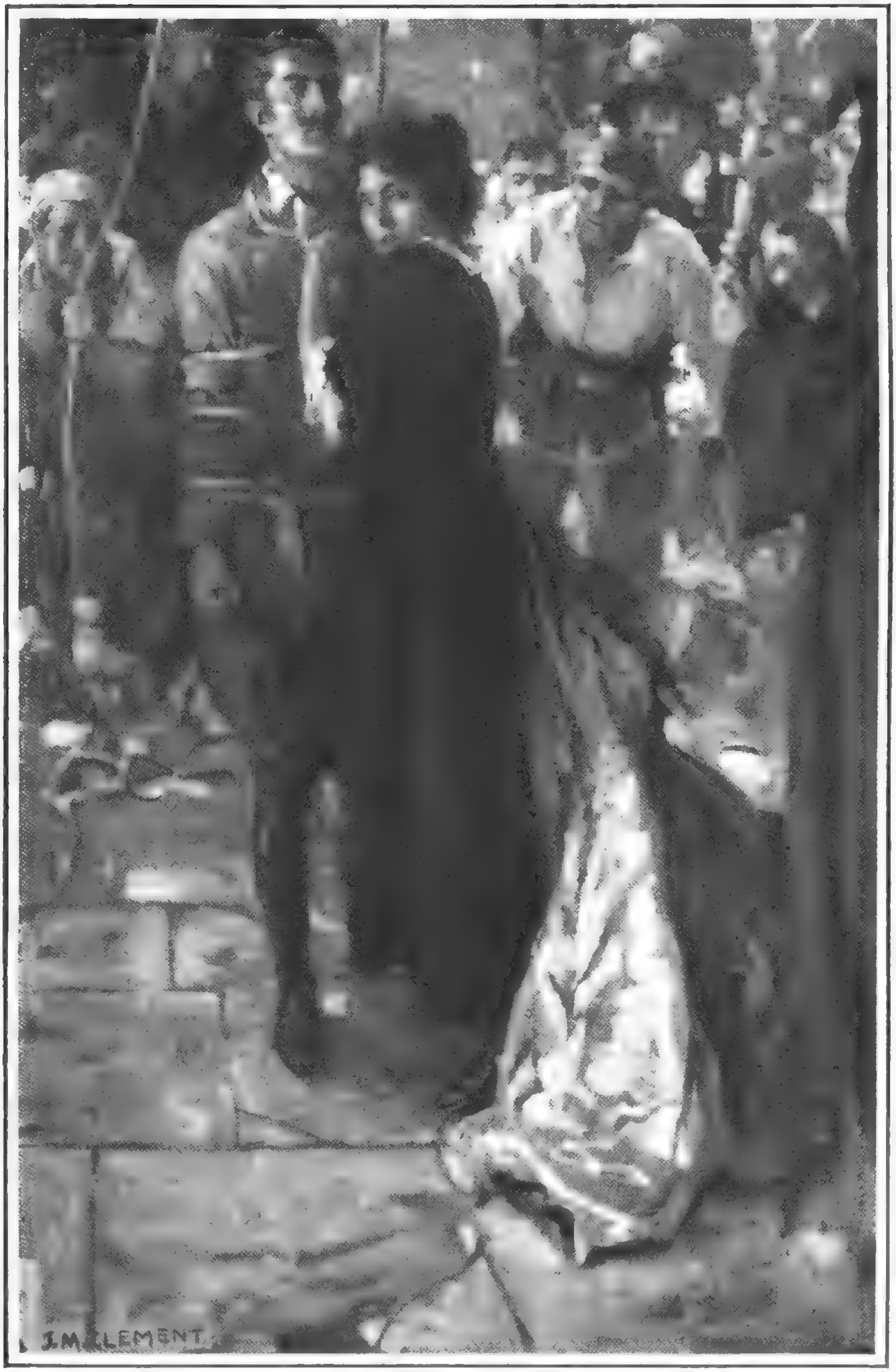
"At last. I went to other places first."

"But no one wanted the job; I can well believe that." He paused for a moment: "Excuse me, but what is your name? As a mere matter of form, you understand, monsieur."

"Professor Pelotard. I am stopping at the Angleterre. Here is a week in advance, and a like amount for provisions. Good evening, captain."

PHILIP COLLIN was busily engaged in writing letters at the hotel when a porter approached him.

"Two gentlemen wish to see you, sir."



"Wretches!" she cried in her broken Spanish. "Don't tell me you dare to lay hands on your ruler!"

"Their names?"

"One gave the name the Count of Punta Hermosa."

Mystified, Collin made his way to the desk, where he found two men waiting. One was small, with gray-sprinkled hair and gold-rimmed glasses. His companion was of gigantic size, with a dark mustache turned up at the corners, and dark eyes with a half languid, half jovial expression. As he took a step forward Collin noticed that he limped.

They both stared at Philip Collin, who, after exchanging a few words with the porter, came toward them.

"Messieurs, you wished to speak to me? My name is Professor Pelotard."

Philip stopped and smiled expectantly. The older man bowed and said:

"I am glad to make your acquaintance. I am the Count of Punta Hermosa and this is my friend, Señor Esteban. We have taken the liberty of seeking you out in a matter which is of the greatest importance to us. Are you very busy, professor?"

"I am to have dinner in an hour. Until then I am at your service."

"Thanks. I'll come straight to the point: you are sailing for Minorca tonight?"

Philip looked at the man in surprise.

"What reason have you for thinking that?"

"You will understand when I tell you that we come from Captain Dupont!"

"Ah!"

"Yes, and the cause for our visiting him is the same which brought you to him this evening."

"Namely, that you wish to go to Minorca?"

"Precisely. As you know, none of the regular steamers are going to the island."

"On account of the revolution, yes."

"And in the whole of Marseilles there seems to be but one person who dares sail to that den of murderers."

Philip nodded.

"And that person is Captain Dupont. We looked him up and learned that the yacht had been hired by you and the price agreed upon. We overbid you; Captain Dupont refused, but made a suggestion."

"And that was?"

"That we should look you up. My friend and I have reasons which oblige us at any price to reach the island. May we beg as a favor that you allow us to go with you? Of course, we will pay two-thirds of the cost."

Philip Collin looked thoughtfully at his visitors. The straightforward manner in which they told about their call on Captain Dupont pleased him, as well as their appearance in general. He bowed and said:

"I have thought it over, gentlemen, and I accept your proposal with pleasure. I make only one condition."

"What is it?" There was an anxious tone in the Count of Punta Hermosa's voice.

"That you will be my guests at dinner."

The two visitors bowed. At the same moment a servant came up to Philip.

"Madame wishes to speak to you, monsieur."

"Tell her I will come immediately. Good evening, gentlemen. We will meet here in three-quarters of an hour. That will allow you time to pack."

He took leave of them with a slight bow.

Philip, after giving orders for dinner, hurried to the room where the supposed Madame Pelotard awaited him. He found her walking up and down her room. As he came in she ran toward him and cried:

"Where have you been so long? I have had word from Jacques."

Philip congratulated her.

"He has escaped, but cannot leave the place where he is hiding. He saw your notice, and sent a message by a friend. I have been waiting the whole afternoon to talk it all over with you. I am leaving tomorrow, and first want to straighten matters out with you, please. Will you tell me how much I owe you?"

TWO days before Philip would have been amused at such a remark as her last, but knowing what he did, he smiled and took a piece of paper from the table.

They became engrossed in their calculations. Finally she was satisfied and paid him from a small pocketbook.

"Monsieur Pelotard," said she, "you have proved yourself a gentleman in every way toward me. If you—if you will accept a remembrance from your traveling companion, then you will give her much happiness."

She stopped and with a slightly embarrassed manner handed over a little case which at the same time sprang open from the pressure of her finger. Philip stared in astonishment at its contents, a scarf-pin of gold, set with ten diamonds encircling a large gleaming pearl. Before he was able to say anything he was forestalled by his mysterious traveling companion.

"If you refuse it," said she, "I will never forgive you."

He bowed deeply and murmured some expression of thanks, but she interrupted him with a motion of her hand, almost as worthy of a queen as her manner a while before.

"It is I who am your debtor," said she. "I can never repay you for what you have done."

She was silent for a moment, then continued:

"You are leaving. May I ask where you intend to go?"

Philip smiled.

"You will admit that I am more communicative than you, if I answer? I am going to a place in which you have shown a very lively interest during the time I have known you."

"To Minorca?" she asked breathlessly and with wide-open eyes.

"To Minorca."

She stared at him for fully half a minute. Then she said slowly:

"This is more than strange. We meet in Paris in a manner which— You are on your way to Marseilles. I too; though without your help I should never have reached here. We are together in Marseilles for two days, and when we are to leave, it turns out that you are going to Minorca—just where I am going tomorrow."

It was Philip's turn to open his eyes wide. She was going to Minorca, too! It *was* more than strange! Was the whole world, then, going to that little island?

"Madame," said he, "you are right. It is really a combination of circumstances more than strange. There is only one detail lacking in what you have said to make this combination still more strange. I believe I can supply it."

"What detail is that?" she asked.

"You mentioned it just now. You said that in Paris you were on your way to Marseilles but would never have reached here without my help; and you may believe me or not: the case is exactly the same if you wish to go from Marseilles to Minorca!"

She sank down on the sofa and looked at him with mistrust.

"You can't mean that," said she. "The boat goes at three o'clock tomorrow."

"The boat, madame, should leave here for Minorca at three o'clock tomorrow, if it were not that the Minorcans are indulging in their little revolution. I am sorry on your account, but all communication with Minorca ceased yesterday."

She stared at him with wide-open eyes, still mistrustful.

"And you, then—how can you go there?"

"Because I have engaged the only private boat in Marseilles that will make the trip."

She looked at him intently for a good half-minute.

"You must have very important reasons for going to Minorca?"

"Just as you, madame."

It became quiet in the room. How should he act in this new and more than strange phase of his adventure? Should he refuse if she begged leave to accompany them on board the *Stork?* Could there be any justification in taking a woman with him to a country where a revolution was in full blast? And what were her reasons for going to that country?

After regarding her for a moment he said thoughtfully:

"I should offer you passage on the boat, but we will not be alone."

"Not alone? How do you mean? I thought you had formed a trust, as you put it."

"Exactly. But an hour ago two gentlemen sought me out who had as pressing reasons as I have for going to the island, and they begged permission to accompany me. Since I am not so pitiless as other trust magnates, I said yes."

"What are their names, if I may ask?"

"The Count of Punta Hermosa and a friend of his, Señor Esteban. They have interests to protect there on the island. But you will soon have an opportunity of meeting them."

"How is that?"

"I have invited them to dinner."

IT WAS somewhat after ten o'clock when two cabs left a party of four at the east pier of the harbor at Marseilles.

Near the quay, against which the waves

were dashing in white brigades, lay a small graceful steam yacht with smoking funnel. A skiff pushed off from her side as the two cabs arrived, and a few minutes later the party was on board Captain Dupont's yacht.

It was but seven in the morning when the lame Count of Punta Hermosa and his old friend Señor Esteban came up the steps from the cabins and carefully picked their way toward the bow, along the lurching deck.

THE Count sat down on a chest which had been placed on deck and motioned to his friend to follow his example.

"How is your stomach behaving, Paqueno?" the Grand Duke inquired. "Is it as sensitive as it was on our outward trip?"

"At present, your Highness, I feel a little better. The air has done me good." Old Señor Paqueno tried to make his voice as hearty as possible, but his pale face showed that matters were not going any too well with him.

"Our outward trip," continued the Grand Duke. "Yes, that was a fruitless journey. I went hoping to arrange loans, and now return to quell a revolution. Really, it's very comfortable on board. But I must say one thing."

"What is that, your Highness?"

"That our host and his wife seem to me rather mysterious. Think of a journalist who has the means to charter a yacht for himself to order to see a beggarly revolution on Minorca! Since when did the papers begin to show such an interest in us, Paqueno? And then his wife. Why, she is ten years older than he!"

"Perhaps he married her for her money, your Highness."

"H'm! Yes, that of course is possible. Anyway, it is strange that she tags along with him. He said nothing about it at first."

"Perhaps she herself decided the matter at the last minute. If I were to express an opinion about Professor Pelotard and his wife, I should say that I almost believe the professor is a bit henpecked." Old Paqueno laughed faintly, but stopped as the *Stork* gave an extra roll.

The Grand Duke suddenly laid a hand on Señor Paqueno's shoulder and stared past him to the steps leading up from the cabins. Either he was dreaming or this was a new mystery to be added to the others; for here on the top step of the stairs, illuminated by the white light of the spring morning, stood Madame Pelotard. But it was a Madame Pelotard who no more resembled the one he had seen the night before than spring resembles winter, than a fresh March morning is like a November evening. She stood there tall and lithe with a face which was as young and fresh as the morning light, and with blue eyes which gleamed like the Mediterranean. The wind, making the waves dance, whirled through the little yacht's rigging and swept her skirt tight around the contour of her body and for a moment ruffled her hair under her sport cap. Now she caught sight of the Count of Punta Hermosa and his friend and came toward them with a gay smile.

"What a delightful morning! Have you slept well, gentlemen?"

"Excellently, madame," said the Grand Duke, who had arisen with a bow. "And you? Will you do us the pleasure of sitting down with us?"

"Thanks," said she, and took a seat on the chest. The Grand Duke, against his will, stared at her, and with his glances took in every movement she made. Suddenly she smiled at him a little spitefully and he stammeringly tried to gloss over his rudeness.

"Madame," said he, "I must beg your pardon, for staring at you so—but to be quite frank I have never before known a sea trip to have such a wonderful effect."

"How is that?"

He hesitated, uncertain as to what he should say. She noticed it and began to laugh.

"Go ahead and say it," she said. "You want, perhaps, to remark that I look a little more youthful."

"Yes, madame, more than a little," said he, but broke off, afraid to wound her feelings through showing too much ardor.

She smiled again.

"It isn't so very strange that you notice it," said she. "I have just been going through a facial cure, you see, and the treatment ended today!"

She looked so absolutely truthful as she uttered this prodigious falsehood that the Grand Duke bowed.

"Your treatment has had a wonderful

effect, madame; you are twenty years younger."

For a few minutes they chatted together and then Madame Pelotard rose abruptly and went below.

AT SIX o'clock the next morning they passed the southeastern coast of Minorca and shortly afterward Port Mahon came in sight. The little city, as white and quiet as ever, rose in terraces from the sea; the Angelus was ringing in the cathedral, and the shadows in the west were sinking heavily over the houses and palm trees. A crescent moon hung in the opal-blue evening sky, and the gulls rested like white lily buds on the transparent water of the harbor.

The *Stork* slowly rounded the breakwater and at half-speed entered the harbor, which was empty with exception of the birds that shriekingly arose at their arrival.

The yacht cast anchor and for some time it looked as though nothing would happen.

Suddenly, however, a boat shot out from the shore and quickly approached the little yacht, bearing a waterman at the oars and two men in uniforms, richly adorned with gold lace. They wore white bands on their left sleeves.

Only Professor Pelotard, his wife and the captain appeared on the deck of the yacht. As they came in sight of Port Mahon, Philip had taken the Count of Punta Hermosa and his friend aside and said:

"Gentlemen, I have decided to put into the principal town itself. I am unknown there and think it is safe to do so. But if I am not mistaken, you have been there before and have property there?"

"Yes."

"Then it seems wise to me that you remain out of sight until I can see how the land lies. Your appearance might lead to violence on the part of the revolutionists."

"You are right," answered the Count, "We will do as you say."

Within ten seconds after the small boat pulled alongside, the two officers were on board. One of them, a young man of hardly thirty, dressed in the most brilliant of uniforms, approached them and made a military salute.

"Good evening," said he in English. "To whom have I the pleasure of speaking?"

Philip looked at him, highly amused.

"My name is Professor Pelotard," said he. "This is my wife, and this is Captain Dupont, who is in charge of this yacht for me. To whom have *I* the pleasure of speaking?"

The young man straightened.

"Luis Hernandez is my name," said he. "Perhaps it is not unknown to you?"

Philip was on the point of laughing; this, then, was the president of Minorca!

"It is a pleasure to make your acquaintance, Mr. President," said he, bowing. "The press of the world has blazoned forth your name during the last four days, ever since the telegram from Captain Simmons was dispatched from Barcelona."

"Ah, he telegraphed? People, then, are talking about me—about us in Europe?"

"You may be sure of that, Mr. President! They talk of nothing else and the papers are full of praise for you and your courageous countrymen. I myself come as representative of the press—come to bring you their greeting and to place their influence at your disposal, Mr. President."

Philip spoke slowly, so as to let each word sink into the thankful soil which Señor Luis Hernandez's heart evidently represented. The presumptive president of Minorca listened with slightly parted lips and with head bent forward, while now and then his hand glided over the gold lace on his sleeve. After clearing his throat he said in an oratorical voice:

"I am pleased to hear it, Mr. Pelotard! But please don't call me president. I am not that yet. The election will not take place for several days."

"Ah!" said Philip with his most amiable smile. "But I have heard that at times the First Consul Bonaparte was called Sire without being displeased!"

A flush of pleasure spread over Señor Hernandez's face, but he threw a quick glance at his companion to see whether the latter understood. Then he said:

"This, Mr. Pelotard, is the Harbor Inspector, Emiliones. He has come to help you in any way you may wish."

He stopped and cast a long glance at the windows to the dining saloon, as though to hint that the President of Minorca would not refuse if he were invited to supper. But Philip, who had his own plans, pretended not to notice it.

"TOMORROW, señor," said he, "I will take the liberty of calling on you, if you will permit me, and will consult you as to what we had best bring out in the papers."

"I'll be very glad to see you, very glad, señor," Luis hastened to say. "You can meet me at whatever time you wish after twelve o'clock. From ten to twelve I inspect the troops."

"And where," asked Philip, "can I find you?"

"In the castle, señor." He bowed stiffly. "I bid you good evening."

He jumped down into his boat with Señor Emiliones, who during the whole time had not uttered a word, and a couple of minutes later their boat had disappeared in the darkness. They were hardly out of sight when Philip hurried down to the cabin and knocked on the Count of Punta Hermosa's door.

"We have had callers, Count, important callers."

"Who, then?"

"President Hernandez. He and I are the best of friends and tomorrow I am to pay him a visit in his apartment at the grand-ducal castle."

"In the grand-ducal— The damned rogue! So, you are going to pay him a visit there? I congratulate you. You seem to be in a hurry to see your friend again."

"H'm! Yes, in any case, I want to see his capital and therefore I intend to land tonight."

"Tonight? You won't see much. The capital's gas works are celebrated for their unreliability."

"I can get along without the gas light. Au revoir, Count."

"Don't be in such a hurry, professor. I think I'll go along too, if you have no objection."

Philip laughed inwardly.

When he and the Grand Duke, who had masqueraded so successfully as the Count of Punta Hermosa, came on deck they saw that not a single gas light was burning in Port Mahon; they would have to get along with the faint light which came from the nocturnal spring sky.

They jumped into the skiff, the Grand Duke took the oars and they started off.

After fifteen minutes of rowing, with only the dim outlines of the buildings along the shore to guide them, they landed with the greatest secrecy and as quietly as possible drew up the skiff to a place among the fishing-boats which lay keel up in front of the sheds. The Grand Duke led the way past the small gray houses, which at that side of the harbor stretched down almost to the water's edge, and entered a narrow alley.

Minute after minute passed in silent order of march; it was difficult for Philip to judge in the narrow winding alleys which way his leader was directing his course.

Suddenly where the alley crossed a somewhat larger street, the Grand Duke stopped and stood motionless. From the broader street in front of them could be heard the steady tattoo of heels in the distance. Click, click, click, the steps came nearer and nearer. In another moment the person, to whose step they were listening, became visible; Philip heard a low hissing sound escape his companion.

WITH genuine Prussian bearing, straight as a ramrod, his square head erect, clad in a cutaway which flapped at every step, and wearing a stiff hat, came a man tramping along the street, whom Philip's eyes with one glance registered as belonging to the species "German commercial traveler." Suddenly, without uttering a word, but with a smothered hiss, the Grand Duke sprang from Philip's side and in a second landed by the German. The next moment his right hand grabbed the German's right wrist, while with his left he clutched at the man's throat; in another second he gave a quick jerk with his right hand, a movement such as the police make when a prisoner resists arrest, while his left closed in a murderous grip. Faintly, but with perfect clearness, Philip heard the German's heavy breathing, and then some words which the Grand Duke uttered in a whisper, but with special emphasis on each and every one:

"Attempt to cry out, Herr Binzer, and I'll strangle you on the spot!"

Although evidently half paralyzed with terror, the German made a last effort to free himself, trying to grab with his left hand, which was free, first the Grand Duke's throat, then an object which lay in his own back pocket. Hastily the Grand Duke let go his hold on the German's throat, raised his left fist and let it fall with a crashing blow against the man's right temple. The German fell to the ground as though struck by lightning.

With flushed face the Grand Duke turned to Philip.

"You are probably shocked at my forceful methods, professor, but this fellow is Herr Isidor Binzer of Frankfort, the person back of the revolution on Minorca!"

"In that case," said Philip quietly, "I can understand both your Highness's feelings and mode of action!"

The Grand Duke stared at him in utter astonishment.

"You know who I am?"

"Yes, your Highness, I do."

"Since when?"

"Since our departure from Marseilles."

The Grand Duke, whose eyes were wide with surprise, mumbled between his teeth:

"I suspected it; I suspected it. But—"

Philip, who did not consider it an appropriate time to go into details, interrupted him.

"Your Highness has dropped a paper."

He bent toward the ground, where Herr Binzer still lay in the same deathlike stupor, and took up a folded sheet of paper which lay by his side.

"Allow me!"

The Grand Duke took the paper and looked at it; not sure what it was, he unfolded it and tried to read it in the dim light. It was too dark, however, and he was on the point of putting it in his pocket when Philip came to his rescue with a pocket flashlight. The Grand Duke cast a look at the paper, read it through and then gave a deep chuckle.

Philip looked at him uncomprehendingly.

"It did not fall out of my pocket," explained the Grand Duke with another chuckle, "but out of Herr Binzer's; and it is nothing less than a contract between him and six of my subjects, who in return for a payment of two hundred thousand pesetas cash agree to bring about my downfall and assassination."

Philip was aroused from his startling thoughts by a slight movement on the part of Herr Binzer.

"Your Highness," he whispered, "we must carry this man Binzer away from here. Does your Highness know any safe place?"

The Grand Duke, who for several moments had stood sunk deep in thought, staring first at Philip, then at the contract, hastily came to his senses at Philip's question and looked around. Everything still seemed quiet in the street where they stood, each house presenting the same deathlike appearance; one of them, however, a one-story building a few steps away, looked even more deserted than the rest. Silently they lifted Herr Binzer and carried him into the dilapidated one-story house. In spite of outward appearances it did not seem to be so completely deserted as they had thought, for in one corner of the room stood various articles, brooms, pails, a stepladder, a lot of empty bottles; and a rope was dangling from a hook on the wall. Following the same impulse, Philip and the Grand Duke pulled the rope from the hook and began to bind Herr Binzer.

After taking the revolver Herr Binzer had tried to use, Philip turned to the Grand Duke.

"Where to, your Highness?"

"To the palace," answered the Grand Duke with a grim smile, "to pay the President a visit."

THEY started off at a quick pace through the streets leading to Port Mahon's eastern terraces, on top of which the massive silhouette of the palace was outlined against the night sky.

When they reached the edge of the palace square, the Grand Duke took Philip by the hand, turned off to the left into the little palace garden and after a while stopped before a small door half concealed by ivy.

Putting his powerful shoulder against the little door, he pushed a few times. It withstood the pressure; but suddenly the lock creaked and snapped. The old rusty latch had broken, and the way was clear before them.

Plunging into darkness as black as night, they groped their way along the passage leading from the small door to the kitchens. Softly, step by step, with infinite care, they continued from there to the hall of the palace. A solitary lamp was smoking at the end of the room nearest to the doorway leading to the square. Philip drew out his pocket flashlight and for a moment let the light shine on his watch; it was five minutes after ten.

Silently, with a litheness one would not have suspected possible in such a gigantic body, the Grand Duke crept forward to listen at the row of doors in the hall.

A bitter smile flew over his face as he looked at them; on each and every one the old grand ducal coat-of-arms had been daubed over with coarse paint, and on one was a visiting card. He hardly needed to read it to know what name it bore.

"Professor," he whispered with a nod to Philip, "this is where the President lives."

Philip hastily tiptoed over, and they both listened intently at the door. Only the faint sound of a solitary person's steps could be heard from within, and following an irresistible impulse Philip suddenly raised his hand and knocked. Steps hastily approached from the other side, then the door opened, and President Luis Hernandez himself appeared on the threshold, standing clear in the lamplight.

Philip had quickly pushed the Grand Duke behind the door as it opened and now bowed serenely to Señor Hernandez.

"Good evening, Mr. President!" said he. "As you see, I have not waited until tomorrow to discuss our plans. Although it is already quite late, I have taken the liberty of calling tonight."

The President's face, which at first had expressed amazement and suspicion as he stared at his guest, gradually cleared as he slowly recognized Philip.

"Ah!" said he with an air of dignity. "You are right. It is late, but you come at an opportune moment. I am just awaiting my friends, my fellow workers. Come in, Mr. Pelotard!"

"Thanks, Mr. President," said Philip, and slowly drew nearer, "but the truth of the matter is, I did not come alone. I have brought a friend with me!"

"A friend!" repeated Hernandez uncomprehendingly. "I thought you were alone on the boat. Have you friends in Minorca?"

"I have one," said Philip with an involuntary quiver in his voice, and grasped the Grand Duke's hand behind the half-open door. "A person who wishes to pay you his respects, Mr. President."

Señor Hernandez stepped back in the room and looked at him with a glance which had suddenly grown suspicious.

"How did you get by the sentry?" he cried. "Let me see your friend immediately and tell me his name!"

"His name," said Philip, rushing into the room, "is Don Ramón XX of Minorca, whom you and your friends undertook to murder for the sum of 200,000 pesetas, and who has come back to watch you count your chickens before they're hatched!"

While he was uttering these words in an ever louder tone, Señor Hernandez had quickly turned round and rushed toward a desk on the farther corner of which lay a revolver.

WITH the agility of a trained athlete Philip sprang forward, and just as Luis stretched out his hand to grasp the revolver, lifted his foot in a mighty kick. The weapon went sailing through the air and Hernandez, who had bent forward, received the toe of Collin's shoe forcibly on the tip of his nose. With a cry of pain he sank in a heap across the desk.

"Well done, professor! Well done!" cried the Grand Duke. "Silent there, you, or I'll kill you outright without further fuss! Silence, I say."

His voice was so terrible that Señor Hernandez's cry of pain stopped as quickly as though his throat had been cut; trembling all over, he arose from the table, looked at his ruler for a moment and then sank to the floor on his knees, with the blood gushing from his wounded nose.

"M-mercy, your Highness!" he panted. "Mercy! I—I have been misled. I had no part in the conspiracy. I swear it."

The Grand Duke looked at him, his eyes blazing with contempt.

"Then you swear falsely, you scoundrel. How does it happen that your name stands first in this contract?"

He suddenly pulled out the paper which had fallen from Herr Binzer's pocket and held it before the eyes of Luis Hernandez. The latter became paler than death, and without a word threw himself prostrate at the Grand Duke's feet and grasped his knees as though begging for mercy. With a quick rough movement Don Ramón freed himself and said to Philip:

"Will you go to the room at the farther end of the hall? I believe you will find some rope there."

After Philip returned they quickly transformed the President of Minorca into an easily handled bundle which, provided with a gag, was placed in the next room. Then the Grand Duke closed the door to the hall and said:

"We can expect Señor Luis's friends at any moment. I am afraid we will have a more difficult task with them than with the President."

The Grand Duke and Philip hurried into the hall of the palace and looked around for a strategic point of operation. After short deliberation they decided to move the lamp to a point between the entrance door and the President's room. They then stationed themselves at the farther end of the hall where it was dark.

For several minutes nothing happened as they stood there in silence.

Steps were heard outside; two or perhaps three people conversing together were approaching the palace. Another sound immediately followed: the sentry challenging them as they approached. A few hasty words were exchanged, then a deep voice was heard saying:

"All right, you can keep watch on the lower terrace. We will look out for things here ourselves."

With a "Yes, señor!" the soldier started off, and the next moment the door of the hall opened.

Three men whom Herr Binzer, had he been there, would have recognized as Amadeo, Eugenio Posada and Father Ignacio, stepped over the threshold, closed the door, and hastily walked in the direction of the room which the Grand Duke and Philip had left a few minutes before.

At the same moment the Grand Duke, holding Herr Binzer's revolver in his hand, lifted his arm, and a report rang out in the little hall of the palace. The three conspirators jumped as though struck by lightning and turning around, saw facing them the man whom they had undertaken to murder for the sum of two hundred thousand pesetas, and Mr. Philip Collin, both of whom held them covered with their revolvers. Then the Grand Duke's voice thundered out:

"Up with your hands! Quick, or we shoot to kill!"

FOR a fraction of a second it seemed as though the man with the black beard and his hollow-eyed friend hesitated in spite of the revolvers which were leveled at them; the hunchback, however, had obeyed the Grand Duke with a celerity which left nothing to be desired. Then, as the Grand Duke's finger slightly pressed the trigger of his revolver, their hands, too, flew silently in the air, while the look in their eyes fully expressed their feeling for Don Ramón. The Grand Duke turned to Philip and said:

"Professor, will you kindly search these gentlemen and see if they carry any weapons? Begin with the worthy Father Ignacio in the picturesque robe."

Philip hastened over to where the three stood and deftly began to empty the deposed priest's pockets.

"All right," cried the Grand Duke after Philip had convinced himself that Father Ignacio was deprived of his fangs. "Take Sergeant Posada next!"

His pockets were found to contain nothing but two revolvers and some gold coins. Philip then turned to the hunchback, whose small bloodshot eyes followed Philip's every action as he drew out a fourth revolver and a knife of respectable size. Then Philip turned to the Grand Duke.

"I'll get some rope, your Highness, so that we can bind these gentlemen and let the president enjoy some company."

He rushed off for the coil of rope. In another five minutes, Father Ignacio was as helpless as could be wished, and Philip was on the point of binding the sergeant when events hastily took a different turn.

The hunchbacked innkeeper, who stood farthest to the left, softly and without attracting any notice slunk away from where he had stood by the sergeant. Then at the moment Philip lifted Father Ignacio and placed him on the floor in order to attend to the sergeant, Señor Amadeo made three springs toward the doorway leading to the square. By the time the Grand Duke had noticed his maneuver and had hastily aimed his revolver at him, he had opened the heavy door; the next moment he was outside and the bullet from Don Ramón's revolver met the wooden panel.

The ensuing events followed even more quickly. The black-bearded sergeant who had stood panting like a royal tiger ready to spring forward in spite of the Grand Duke's revolver, needed nothing more than Amadeo's flight to bring him into action. Like a great beast of prey he threw himself against Don Ramón before he could turn after his shot at the innkeeper; the sergeant's arms flew around him and together they rolled over and over on the stone floor. The revolver fell from the Grand Duke's hand and it became a battle of muscle against muscle.

Philip watched the spectacle, not daring to use his revolver; the two fighters were rolling over each other so quickly that he might just as likely hit the last member of the old House of Ramiros as his enemy. Father Ignacio, at his feet, encouraged his fellow-conspirator with hoarse cries, and began a sort of chant which sounded doubly weird in the strange light.

At the moment when the Grand Duke seemed to have the best of it, their positions changed quickly and the sergeant got the upper hand. Just as Philip was about to interfere, Don Ramón gave a sudden jerk with his powerful body; the next moment he had gained the upper hand and, forcing the sergeant to the ground, slammed his head on the stone floor. The man's brutish muscles suddenly relaxed; his body twitched a few times and then he lay still. With effort the Grand Duke arose.

"A dangerous fellow, as I said, professor! If you will get the rope we will bind him!"

SCARCELY had the sergeant been securely bound when Don Ramón gave a cry.

"What's the matter, your Highness?" Philip asked uneasily.

"My servants, those two fine fellows!" said the Grand Duke. "I had forgotten all about them! I wonder what the scoundrels have done with them? If they have murdered them, I will shoot them on the spot without first bothering about trial and sentence."

Hastily they proceeded toward the room where they had put Hernandez.

Philip noticed for the first time that the Grand Duke limped more than usual and asked him if he had hurt his foot.

"Slightly. It doesn't matter. It makes me more symmetrical now, limping on both legs."

They found Señor Hernandez absolutely stunned by the events of the evening.

"Hernandez," said the Grand Duke, "you have an old father who has always been the direct opposite of yourself—an honorable and industrious man. For his sake, I will once more reconsider what is to become of you, but only on condition that you immediately tell me what you have done with Auguste and Joaquin!"

It took more than half a minute before the former president seemed to realize what had been said. Then big tears began to run down his cheeks as he snuffled:

"In the little hunting lodge, your Highness, in the little hunting lodge."

"You damned scoundrel!" roared the Grand Duke. "In the little hunting lodge that has not been used for thirty years and is over-run with rats!" He turned to Philip. "Professor," said he, "if you would like to do me a great service, then look for my poor servants and set them free. If you will go and let them out I will wait here. My head is whirling around a little too much after all this wrestling and my foot is causing me more trouble than at first. Probably you can get them without difficulty."

"With or without difficulty, it doesn't matter," said Philip. "But where is the little hunting lodge?"

"You will find it if you go directly down through the palace gardens which we passed as we came in. The lodge is white. Have you a good sense of direction?"

"Excellent," said Philip.

As he went out he saw the Grand Duke wearily throw himself on a chair in the hall. Two meters from him on the floor was the deposed priest, still chanting. At the lower end of the hall lay the black sergeant as immovable as before.

AS DON RAMÓN sat down, he felt far worse than he let Philip imagine. The fight with the black sergeant had exhausted him and the foot which he had wrenched bothered him twice as much now that he was alone.

Rising with a stagger, he went over to that part of the hall where he and the professor had first entered. There Joaquin had fitted up a small closet as pantry. Kneeling, he began to fumble around on the lower shelves; a lot of empty bottles stood there, evidently put there since President Hernandez had taken possession, for orderly little Joaquin would never have let them pile up in such a manner.

At last he grasped one which contained some liquid; he partly rose from his stooping position and smelled of the bottle. Yes, that was right; it seemed to contain cognac.

At the same moment he felt a stinging blow from some hard object on the back of the head; everything seemed to go around and around, and he fell forward into the darkness.

When he came to his senses again he at first was conscious only of his head, which kept whirring and snapping as though it were an induction machine, while a thousand red and white dots danced before his eyes like so many shooting stars. Then he became conscious of something else: he sat tightly bound to a chair; the rope cut into his throat and into his ankles, and round about him, indistinct as the distant roar of the sea, he heard the murmur of many voices.

On every side, watching him, shrieking, laughing and swearing, pushing this way and that, were people whom in his confused state his eyes at first refused to recognize; then his returning senses gradually enabled him to realize who these people were! And the first one he recognized was the man whom, two hours before, he had left tightly bound and gagged in a deserted house on one of the streets: Herr Binzer of Frankfort!

But it was not Herr Binzer's voice which gave him the explanation of what had happened; it was that of the innkeeper Amadeo. With gleaming eyes, his coarse straggling hair on end, the little hunchback was dancing up and down on the floor before the others, whom Don Ramón gradually succeeded in counting. There were six, but with the exception of Herr Binzer he recognized only three of them. These were Luis Hernandez, the sergeant and Father Ignacio.

"It is I, comrades, it is I, señores, I, Amadeo of the 'Comandante'! If it had not been for me—what would have happened to you? Before tomorrow night you would all have been shot—all of you, Father Ignacio, Eugenio, the great Luis and Señor Binzer himself. Do you know where I found Señor Binzer? Bound up in my storehouse!"

"Yes, yes," came the German's voice, harsh and hard as usual. "Enough of that, Amadeo! Who was it that brought back your courage and made you seek your friends here? It was I who did all that, and"—pointing to the Grand Duke—"who led the way here and struck down that fellow there?"

Don Ramón suddenly felt a little physical energy return to his aching body as he heard this last boast of his enemy.

"If it was Señor Binzer," said he, "then I promise he shall hang for it before tomorrow night."

"HANG!" Herr Binzer rushed over to where the Grand Duke sat bound. "Hang, did you say? There is one who shall hang, my friend, and that one is you! You!" he shrieked. "You damned poorhouse Duke! Do you remember what you did to me a short time ago? You hit me in the face—here is your pay for it! And for tonight!"

Beside himself with rage, he began to shower blows on his tightly bound opponent's face. The others had grown silent. In spite of everything some feeling of respect, inherited through the centuries, remained for the princely house; only Amadeo laughed wildly.

At this moment Luis, who had been in consultation with the others, came forward.

"We wish to know," he said, "who the other person was that took part in all this."

Don Ramón looked at him and said coldly:

"You will know before tomorrow night when you are all to be hanged."

Luis, growing pale, continued:

"We know that he arrived this afternoon in a small yacht. Were *you* on it too?"

The next moment the black sergeant pushed himself forward.

"Were you on the yacht or not? Answer," he roared, "and no tricks!"

The Grand Duke gave him a scornful look. At the same moment he was struck by an idea. With a quiet look at those gathered about him, he said:

"I was on the yacht. But there was something else besides me which your friend Hernandez forgot to notice."

"What was that?" cried the sergeant.

"That the boat is equipped for wireless telegraphy."

There was silence for a couple of seconds. The conspirators stared at each other, half uncertain what Don Ramón meant, half frightened at the hidden threat which seemed to lie in his words. Herr Binzer was probably the only one who really understood what it all signified.

For a short time the room was absolutely quiet. The Grand Duke seemed to have more than achieved his purpose. All were familiar with the sight of those immense British and French battleships which often stopped at the island on their cruises through the Mediterranean; it was quite possible that the *Stork* had communicated with them.

Herr Binzer began to realize what fate might await him as the unfortunate instigator of the revolution. First there was a mumbling from the innkeeper Amadeo and the three men Don Ramón did not know; then Luis's voice, half snuffling with fright, blended with the murmuring, and at last came the black sergeant's roaring bass. "Down with the German! He is the cause of it all! The devil take him—the stingy coward! What good would the revolution do us?" For a moment it seemed as though Don Ramón had played his cards to win; then through a gigantic effort Herr Binzer managed to make his voice heard.

"Comrades," he cried, "don't be cowardly! Don't be afraid! Are you begging mercy of *him?* This is the way I treat him." He lifted his hand to strike Don Ramón in the face, but stopped before the new expression he saw in the faces of his fellow conspirators. "If I want to," added Herr Binzer. "Are you going to let him frighten you with his story about wireless telegraphy? He is trying to frighten you, that is all! And what of it, if he is speaking the truth? If an English cruiser does show up before morning, will we be treated any better because we have begged for mercy? Hasn't he sworn that we shall hang before tomorrow night? If you are to prevent it, comrades, there is only one way: for *us* to hang *him* immediately! Then if we scuttle the boat he came in, I would like to see the English cruiser which could prove anything against us!"

Herr Binzer stopped and the Grand Duke saw that the German had won his point.

A WILD murmur arose, growing louder and louder; Don Ramón was pulled out of his chair and they began to look around for a place where the execution could take place. The black sergeant had thrown off the coat of his uniform; there was no doubt he intended to assume the duties of executioner.

Suddenly, just as the innkeeper Amadeo, assisted by one of the others, was preparing to put up a ladder and fasten the rope on a hook in the ceiling, three heavy blows were heard on the door, the sound rising above the noise and shouting within the room.

For a moment silence reigned and there was a clutch of dread at the Grand Duke's heart; it was the professor returning just in time to witness the execution! What would *his* fate be?

Then the black sergeant sprang forward, slowly drew back the bolt and opened the door, evidently without understanding what it was all about.

He turned and burst into laughter.

"A little señorita," he cried, "coming to see the palace at this time of night! Thank goodness we can show her something worth seeing!"

Hardly believing his eyes, the Grand Duke saw the door open wide. Madame Pelotard stepped over the threshold.

It was evident that she did not in the least understand what was happening; she seemed torn between surprise, fear and a desire to appear brave. A grin cleaved the sergeant's black beard, as he said:

"Who gives us this pleasure? Is it possible that you also came on the mysterious yacht, señorita?"

She cast a frightened glance at him; then she turned her eyes away without answering. The next second she caught sight of the Grand Duke bound to his chair.

"Count!" she cried in French. "What has happened? Tell me!"

Don Ramón looked at her without answering; he had not yet recovered from the paralyzing pain and surprise which had come over him.

"Madame Pelotard," he at last succeeded in answering, "why, *why* did you come here? This is the bitterest hour of my life!"

"I went on land with Captain Dupont," said she. "We were both uneasy; we did not know—we could not understand what was delaying you. Somehow I became separated from the captain, and I knew no other place where I might find you. I could see the palace, although it was dark. But what have you done, Count? Tell me, why are you bound?"

The Grand Duke looked at her in despair, at a loss to prepare her for what was about to happen, when he was suddenly relieved of all trouble in this respect by a third person—Herr Binzer of Frankfort.

"Aha!" he shrieked. "So your Highness has been traveling incognito! Your Highness is a Count! Señorita, let me enlighten you on one subject in case you are not aware of it: this gentleman whom you call Count is—no, *was* Grand Duke of Minorca, and his name, señorita, is Don Ramón XX!"

THE young woman, who up to now had been staring at the Grand Duke with a shy, almost frightened look, suddenly drew herself up like a queen; her eyes glowed with a look of the happiest surprise, and while Herr Binzer and the others stared at her uncomprehendingly, she cried to the Grand Duke in a voice which they hardly recognized:

"Is he telling the truth? Are you the Grand Duke of Minorca?"

Don Ramón smiled bitterly at the expression on the face; he waited before he answered:

"Since Herr Binzer has unmasked me, it is not worth while my denying it. I am the Grand Duke of Minorca—and you have come just in time to see me hanged by my faithful subjects!"

She almost laughed as she answered:

"Never! I have come just in time to save you from them! In five minutes you shall be free!"

Before he was able to answer, Herr Binzer broke in:

"His Highness, my dear lady, knows us better than you. And now enough of this. Is everything ready, comrades? Is the hook firm?"

Amadeo turned hastily toward the improvised gallows. He tested it by jerking the rope a couple of times.

"We are ready!"

"Good!"

Without wasting time on further questions, Herr Binzer gave a sign to the black sergeant. While the woman, half petrified, looked on, they loosened the cords which bound the Grand Duke to the chair; taking care not to touch those around his arms and legs. The next moment the Grand Duke was dragged toward the improvised gallows where Amadeo and the three others were waiting. Suddenly the rigidness which had seemed to bind Madame Pelotard disappeared; she rushed forward and with flashing eyes placed herself in the way of Herr Binzer and the black sergeant.

"Wretches!" she cried in her broken Spanish. "How dare you! Don't tell me you dare to lay hands on your ruler!"

"Señorita," cried the sergeant, "please step aside. We will attend to you later—after the execution!"

She stared at him.

"You mean that you dare—"

"Dare!" repeated the sergeant with a roar. "You will see for yourself in a second!"

Beside herself, tense with impotent desperation, she looked at the Grand Duke with burning eyes and cried in a voice which could hardly be understood:

"Then, as truly as I am Olga Nikolaievna, Grand Duchess of Russia, I will give myself no peace until you have paid for this crime with your lives! I swear it, by all the hopes I have of saving him whom you think of—murdering—by—by my—by my love for him!"

Her voice broke and, staggering forward, she threw her arms around Don Ramón, who stood there bound, powerless, his thoughts whirling in his head as though he were delirious. None of the conspirators seemed to have understood what she had cried out. He felt the noose held around his neck; saw the black sergeant brutally push her toward Herr Binzer, who grinningly watched the whole affair.

Then Amadeo and his two helpers dragged him nearer to the gallows; the rope grew tight around his neck and he raised his eyes to take a last farewell of her who that night had dared everything for his sake; whom he had so cruelly wronged; and who had said that she loved him. Their glances met; he saw her on the point of fainting and Herr Binzer spreading his arms . . .

BEFORE his hands could grasp the Grand Duchess, a shot resounded from the other end of the hall. There was a howl, a howl of deadly pain; the arms which were about to embrace the Grand Duchess groped in the air and the man fell heavily on the marble floor.

But before the echo of the first shot had died away six further shots cracked in such quick succession that they sounded like one; the rope which was choking the Grand Duke suddenly loosened, he tottered and fell. From what seemed an endless distance he heard a voice crying:

"Have courage, your Highness! Auguste, Joaquin, another volley! Death to the wretches—give quarter to none of them!"

He heard gasps and shrieks beside him, three or four more shots and the next moment he felt a hand press some cold object between his wrists. A slash, and they were free. Another, and the rope around his feet was gone. He made out a face bending over him and, although hardly able to speak, he succeeded in mumbling:

"In the nick of time! Have you—have you by chance any cognac?"

Joaquin took firm hold of his master and gently began to lead him toward the room where President Hernandez had dwelt shortly before.

As they went the Grand Duke involuntarily cast a look behind him. The leaders of the Minorcan Republic lay there in a heap; their bodies had already begun to assume the rigidity of death. At just that moment Philip came out of the inner room.

"How is your Highness? It was the last minute, I am afraid, for you and for my poor wife."

Don Ramón's eyes suddenly burned with repressed tears. He remembered how he had seen *her* just before help came, about to lose consciousness at sight of his execution. Poor little Princess! How could she have done what she did! Her life, everything, she had been willing to risk for his sake, for him who— With an effort he suppressed his tears and gravely nodded to Philip.

"Yes, you came in time, professor. For me and for *her*."

Five minutes later the palace door closed behind them for the last time that night. Philip, Joaquin and Auguste took turns helping bear a litter on which the Grand Duchess lay in a light feverish stupor. After fifteen minutes' march Philip started at a certain thought, and gripped the Grand Duke's arm.

"Did your Highness count how many dead there were lying in the hall?"

The Grand Duke shook his head and looked at him reproachfully.

"Don't misunderstand me, I only happened to think of something; if I am not mistaken, the President was not among them!"

It was Don Ramón's turn to give a start. Luis Hernandez had *not* been present during the final occurrences in the hall!

IT WAS a queer procession that moved down the quiet streets. To go around to the skiff for the *Stork* was out of the question; it would mean at least fifteen minutes' further march; and they all were worn out.

A few minutes later they reached the waterside. A little rowboat, evidently the same which had carried the President and his friend to the *Stork*, lay drawn up on the beach. Panting heavily, Auguste and Joaquin put the litter on the ground and the Grand Duke turning to them said in a whisper:

"Go back to the Universal. Tomorrow I will come on land again and assume control. Good night!"

It required but a moment to lift the Grand Duchess to the boat. Without knowing how it happened, Don Ramón suddenly found himself sitting on a cushion with her in his arms. Then he heard Philip Collin say:

"The litter, your Highness! One moment; I'll jump ashore and hide it."

Philip, after picking up the litter, stood for a moment undecided what he should do with it. Suddenly he noticed that the door of one of the two sheds stood open and he quickly decided to hide the litter there. No one would find it before morning. Dragging it after him, he had just entered the shed when he suddenly felt a hand against his cheek and jumped back with a cry of horror. For a moment he stood as though paralyzed, trembling all over. Then he pulled out his flashlight and pressed the button.

There before him hung—the first President of Minorca!

Without saying a word about what he had seen, Philip threw himself into the boat and took the oars. The boat flew through the fog without his thinking of direction, and a good ten minutes had passed before his excited state was replaced by a more normal frame of mind.

"Has your Highness any idea where the yacht lies?" Philip asked in a raised voice.

Don Ramón gave a start.

"The yacht," he mumbled. "No, professor, really I haven't."

"We must call to them," said Philip.

He put his hands to his mouth.

"Hullo, the *Stork*, Captain Dupont!"

Before the echo of his voice died away, the fog around them was cleaved by a milk-white ribbon of light which quickly found their boat and dazzled their eyes. A voice called out in fairly good Spanish:

"Stop! Wait where you are!"

A few moments went by; the gray bulk of a battleship loomed out of the darkness and a boat-hook stretched down to them.

What followed seemed like a dream. Their small party was conducted on board and a man in the uniform of an officer of the Russian navy questioned them. When he saw the woman he gave a sudden start, and turned to another officer whom he addressed in Russian. The latter saluted and went below, to return in a moment with a second person who no sooner saw the woman than he gave a startled cry and rushed forward. A moment later they were in each other's arms.

Philip Collin regarded them with evident amusement, and turned to Don Ramón, whose eyes were staring in surprise.

"Is it possible that your Highness does not know the tall officer who is receiving such gracious treatment?"

Don Ramón shook his head without the expression in his eyes becoming milder.

"He is Peter Nikolaievich, Grand Duke of Russia, and the lady is his sister!"

IT WAS after the princess had told briefly to her brother the events of the last few days that he looked scowlingly both at her and at Don Ramón.

"How long have you been traveling alone with these gentlemen?" said he curtly.

It was her turn to be embarrassed.

"Five days," she murmured. "Three with the Grand Duke."

Grand Duke Peter became silent and looked intently at them. Then he turned quickly to an officer who was standing at the door.

"Barinsky," said he in French, "please awaken Father Sergei, have the chapel put in order and on the way arrange for a guard of honor. All lights are to be turned on and the imperial salute fired in a quarter of an hour. Inform Father Sergei that a wedding will take place."

A wedding! Philip Collin gave a start, overwhelmed with the greatest feelings of amazement and triumph. But would the Grand Duke of Minorca agree to it?

Hardly had the last words passed from Grand Duke Peter's lips before Don Ramón arose pale with anger.

"Is this a joke?" he asked. "Will you immediately recall your messenger?"

The other was not at a loss for a reply.

"My dear friend, for three days you have been traveling with my sister under very unconventional circumstances. You arrive on board this Russian vessel with her in your arms. If you are a gentleman there is but one way—"

The Russian Grand Duke had hardly uttered these words when his sister, as pale as death, interrupted him.

"Peter! Stop! Not even you have any right to force me into this hateful— He does not love me—he would rather die—"

Her voice broke, and she put her hands before her face.

Suddenly, with a cry full of longing, love and, in spite of all, sorrow, Don Ramón was on his knees at her side, and with his eyes lifted to hers, murmured:

"Princess! Olga! Do not misunderstand me! I love you, I worship you! I desire nothing on earth but you."

Ten minutes later as the preparations for the ceremony were under way, the Grand Duke of Russia turned to Philip.

"Have you ever attended such an illustrious wedding—you, who have done so many things?"

"Never," said Collin, looking at his watch. "And to tell the truth, never one held at such a late hour, either."

The next morning when Philip came on deck he found the Grand Duke waiting for him. Together they made their way to a small table under a bright awning where a few minutes later the steward served to them their morning vodka; and Philip needed no word from the Grand Duke to tell him that he would probably never drink its like again. Suddenly the Russian seemed to remember something.

"By the way! They have been inquiring for you by signal from the new boat."

"For me? From the new boat?"

"Yes, the one that came in an hour ago—the *Petrel*. It is lying inside the harbor. A Jew on board wants to see you."

Philip stared toward the harbor to the place where a white yacht had anchored with an English flag flying from its masthead. Then with a puzzled look on his face he turned to his host.

"A Jew?"

"Yes, Isaacs, or some such name. He will be on board shortly."

The Grand Duke called in Russian to his adjutant, who had been silently waiting in one of the corners of the bridge. A moment later the signal flags began to dance from the *Czar Alexander's* mast and very shortly afterward a boat pushed off from the white yacht in the harbor. After five minutes' rowing it came alongside the colossal Russian war vessel and an elegantly dressed gentleman with a black Mephistophelian beard and an extremely serious air about him mounted to the deck, three steps at a time.

"Where is the professor?" Philip heard him cry. "Professor Pelotard. They signaled that I should come over."

PHILIP heard the sound of hasty footsteps on the stairs, and then Mr. Isaacs stood on the officers' bridge.

With a smile on his face, Philip stepped over to greet him.

"Good morning, Mr. Isaacs! How are you? How on earth does it happen that you are here?"

Mr. Isaacs looked at him with eyes which were not brimming over with good humor.

"I have come here trying to save one million three hundred thousand pounds," said he coldly. "A nice bit of business—a plaguy fine bit of business! And you here indulging in a morning glass of beer!"

"Why, Mr. Isaacs! If you only knew how hot the climate is here! But let me present you to his Imperial Highness."

Mr. Isaacs took two steps back and looked at Philip as though he were crazy.

"Yes, his Imperial Highness, Grand Duke Peter of Russia, who has been kind enough to offer me a morning drink and to invite you here!"

Mr. Isaacs's hat flew off quick as lightning before the Grand Duke, who gave a friendly nod in return and said:

"Will you give me the pleasure of having breakfast on board? We sit down in an hour. No excuses, please!" His eyebrows knitted together slightly and Mr. Isaacs hastily bowed and said yes.

But the Grand Duke was hardly out of hearing distance before Isaacs turned to Collin.

"For heaven's sake," he said, his face wrinkled in perplexity, "tell me what this means!"

Hastily Philip related all that had happened, ending with the remark:

"You see, the Grand Duke Peter is an old friend of mine. I made his acquaintance in a beer hall in Hamburg!"

Mr. Isaacs, who had listened to the recital with ever-growing amazement, burst out at the conclusion:

"By Jove! By Jove! It came near being a Waterloo—you are better than Napoleon; you turned it into an Austerlitz!"

An officer stood before them, bowing and saluting.

"His Highness bids me welcome you to breakfast, gentlemen!"

As breakfast was finished Philip felt a tap on his shoulder. It was Don Ramón and his bride.

"Professor," said he, "there is something we want to talk over with you."

"And I guess what it is," said Philip with a smile. "The matter of the Grand Duchy of Minorca's indebtedness. Am I right?"

The Grand Duke gave a laugh, and Philip continued:

"It was really with Mr. Isaacs's money that I carried out the coup. It was his money that cornered the market on the Minorcan bonds."

"Tell us about it, professor!"

And Mr. Collin, whose tongue had never before been so occupied, began to tell the entire story. When he had finished the Grand Duchess turned to Mr. Isaacs.

"And what was the whole amount you laid out for your coup?"

"One million three hundred thousand pounds was my contribution."

"What price would you ask in selling the bonds now?"

"If any one offered me two millions—"

Before Philip could say a word she had quickly sat down at the table, drawn out a check-book, and filled in a slip of paper.

"Thank you, Mr. Isaacs, here is your check. May I ask you to give me an acknowledgment that you have accepted it and that the Grand Duke of Minorca's state of indebtedness is ended?" She turned toward Collin. "And for the professor, we have a different arrangement. He risked fifty thousand pounds." She handed him a folded slip.

Philip opened the little piece of paper. It was a check drawn on the same bank as that which Mr. Isaacs had received, and the figure in the upper corner read five million francs.

Philip quietly folded the check, carried it to a candle that stood on a near-by table, and let it change to ashes. When the Grand Duchess saw it she said:

"You force me to write out a new check. That is not kind of you!"

"One million two hundred fifty thousand francs is the right amount, if I am not mistaken," said Philip calmly.

EARLY in the evening of the following day Mr. Isaacs and Philip Collin departed on the former's yacht after he, Philip, the grand-ducal pair, Paqueno and Grand Duke Peter had partaken of a farewell dinner on board the *Czar Alexander*. Then the *Petrel* was brought close alongside the colossal gray battleship and in a few seconds Philip and the great financier were rowed over to their own boat in an imperial Russian skiff. It was beginning to grow dusk; the palms in the west outlined themselves in purple contour against the horizon and the evening sky glowed like a fading roseleaf over old Minorca. From the deck of the *Czar Alexander* Grand Duke Peter, Don Ramón and the Grand Duchess waved to Mr. Isaacs and Philip, while the *Petrel* slowly glided out over the tinted Mediterranean.

Mr. Collin leaned over the railing and cried:

"I'm coming back to Minorca next year on the *Stork*, and I hope by then its namesake will already have paid a visit, and that the succession to the throne is assured through Don Ramón XXI!"

THE END

# Old Ships

## By Harold Vinal

WHAT memories hang round about the spars
Of splendid ships that come to port no more,
What dreams of moonlit seas and lovely stars,
What sound of waters on a wooden floor.
Something remembered from an ancient day
Comes back to haunt them when the evening falls,
The cry of gleaming birds from far away,
The moan of winds around their whitened walls.
Something survives to make them wistful still
Of silver harbors that they knew of yore,
Of midnight quiet by a secret hill
Of shining lights upon a singing shore.
Perchance a ghostly gull against the sky
Or a white sail at twilight flashing by.

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# THE LINKSTER

## *Wherein Shakespeare's England, as Preserved in the Southern Mountains, Is Confronted by a Tragic Phase of the World War*

### By Hodge Mathes

THE door of my classroom opened softly, and the assistant janitor entered apologetically.

"Pardon me, professor. There are two women in the corridor below who wish to speak to you. They look like mountain women and wouldn't state their business to me. I told them you were probably busy."

"No, Williams, I'm not teaching at this hour," I replied. "Show them upstairs if you will."

The clatter of heavy shoes sent an unwonted echo through the quiet hallway. In a moment two slatternly women stood hesitant at the threshold of the room.

"Mister," the older and bolder inquired, "air you a linkster?"

"Beg pardon, madam, am I a *what?*" I asked, a bit dazed at the unusual query.

"Air you a linkster?" the woman repeated. "We've jist come from Lawyer Taylor's office down yander in town, an' he 'lowed jedgmatically ye was."

"Well, I've been called a good many things, and if my friend Judge Taylor says I'm this particular thing, he's probably right. But I think you'll have to tell me just what a linkster is or what he does."

"Why, Mister, a linkster's a feller that can read writin' er understand talkin' in a furrin tongue—say like Injun er Dutch er somethin' thataway."

I began to see the light. "Linkster"—why, of course, "lingister"—a forgotten Appalachian word I seemed to have known somewhere before. Not strange that in a land where a foreigner is as rare as the dodo the word for "interpreter" should have faded from most men's memory.

"Why, I'm afraid I'm not the kind of one you wish," I replied. "I know nothing of any Indian tongues and very little of Dutch, though I do know some foreign languages and teach two of them in this college. But why do you ask?"

"Why, Mister, we've got all bumfuzzled about a letter that come in the mail t'other day. Hit's writ in some kind of writin' that nobody in Dry Cove can't read hit. Squar Gaby he 'lowed hit was Dutch er Latting maybe, so I brung hit to town an' showed hit to Lawyer Taylor an' he 'lowed you could interpetate hit."

"Possibly I might," I said. "Have you the letter with you?"

"Yes, sir, we fotch hit," the older woman continued. "Virgie, give hit to the man."

The younger woman, a girl of probably twenty years, drew a tinted square envelope from a pocket in her long, loose, incredibly old-fashioned coat. The flat voice of the old woman went on.

"We was fearful hit mought be about my boy. He's in the war—somers on yan side. His name's John Hilton, an' this here's his wife, Virgie Hilton."

"Oh, I begin to understand now," I answered, taking the letter. "This is written in French, and I can read it easily enough. Shall I translate it for you?"

"Yes, sir, I reckon that's what you call hit. We want to know who hit's from an' what hit says."

"Well, come in and sit down and I will read it to you. Then if you wish, I will have a stenographer make a copy in English so that you can read for yourselves."

"They wouldn't be no needcessity of that, Mister. Can't nary one of us read no kind of writin' ner printin', but we can recollec' the main idy of it if you'll read it off, like."

THE letter, as a glance revealed, was from a girl in a tiny village of northern France. It was addressed to the father and mother of John Hilton who, at the time of writing, was billeted in the home of the French girl's parents. The note had been laboriously but crudely penned and there were numerous errors of composition, but it was typically and eloquently "Frenchy." I glanced hastily through its contents before I began to translate it aloud.

Instantly I saw the situation. Either the simple-minded peasant girl had been dazzled by the glamour of a stalwart American doughboy, or the simple-minded doughboy had fallen an easy prey to the wiles of the village vampire. The girl's letter gave it all away. The boy was her lover. He had promised to marry her and bring her to America. To surprise him she was secretly writing this message to his parents after beguiling him to give her their names and address.

She loved dear Jean very, very much and would try very, very hard to be a good *belle-fille* to her dear *beau-père* and her dear *belle-mère* in America. She was praying the Holy Mother every day that he might be kept from harm in the terrible war, and the old priest in the village was praying, too. She was sending a thousand kisses and most tender caresses to the dear parents of Jean, and was, with sincere affection, their humble and most dutiful daughter, Héloïse Michaud.

I had read the letter through rapidly, partly in order that if it told of any mishap befallen the son and husband at the front, I might soften somewhat the blow of evil tidings for the mother and wife; but this was something I wasn't prepared for. Apparently my plain business as a "linkster" was simply to translate the message as it stood. It was no affair of mine, anyhow. I had merely been called in to render a slight favor to total strangers whom I should probably never see again.

So I reasoned, and turned in my swivel-chair to read; but a second glance at the young wife changed my decision in a twinkling. The older woman's face wore that stoical, unreadable expression that the years bring to the hardy mothers of mountain men.

But the girl-wife's large hazel eyes were fixed on me with a wondering, hoping, agonizing appeal that strangely belied the outward calm she maintained. Despite the formless drapery of the heavy coat she wore this warm autumn morning, it was apparent that her great hour was but a matter of a few weeks—perhaps a few days. And I held in my hand a letter from the far-away unknown somewhere, whither they had sent her man and the father of her babe. News of him was now to break the silence of the anxious months since that last blissful week he had been given to spend at home.

And that is why I, a respectable professor of modern languages in a staid old college—I, a deacon in the Presbyterian church, deliberately made that French letter read, as nearly as I can now recall, like this:

DEAR FRIENDS IN AMERICA:

This is to give you news of your dear son John Hilton, who for some weeks has been stationed in this village preparatory to being transferred to the front lines. He wishes me to tell you that he is well and happy and is being as well cared for as possible in our little home. He speaks of you every day, especially of his father and mother and his dear young wife. I am praying the Holy Mother each day that he may be kept from harm in the terrible war. He says that if you can find some one to write he can have the letter read by a comrade or by the old priest in the village. With sincere affection from your unknown friends in France, I am

Affectionately yours,
HÉLOÏSE MICHAUD.

The contents of the letter as thus rendered were eminently satisfactory to the listeners. Even the mother's expressionless countenance lighted with a smile that exposed the two ugly yellow snags in her shrunken mouth and threw into startling contrast the singularly perfect ivory teeth of the girl. The inexpressible relief and happiness shining in every line of the young wife's radiant face made me brazenly indifferent as to the probable attitude of the Recording Angel toward my well-intentioned duplicity.

"She shore writes like a good gal, don't she, Virgie?" the mother ejaculated when I had finished.

"Yes, an' awful religious-like, too. She talks plumb purty!"

"Well, Mister—er—Perfesser, I reckon I ort to say—we're much obleeged to ye fer readin' hit to us. We're pore folks an'

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hain't got nothin' much, but if ye ever git out in them mountings yander we'd be real proud fer ye to drap in. We'll be gittin' along now." And with their gratitude voiced thus eloquently in the crude phrases of bygone days, they stalked out of the room.

I watched them as they crossed the campus, their rustic dress and carriage made the more conspicuous as they passed a group of college girls at the gate. But as in fancy I followed their awkward footsteps out of the little city and along the dusty miles to where the undulating azure of the Cherokee range softened into the southern skyline, I couldn't help feeling a bit prouder of my proficiency in the Romance Languages than I'd ever been before!

And yet there was one disconcerting fly in the ointment of my complacency. That was the fear that, in the canny, suspicious way our mountain folk have in their dealings with strangers, they should decide to corroborate my rendering of the strange letter by seeking the aid of another "linkster." I blamed myself for not having written my "translation" and substituted it for the original, keeping the latter in my possession.

THE incident of the French letter had been all but forgotten in the busy routine of the spring semester's work, when one day at the luncheon hour I was taking a few moments' exercise by strolling along the maple-lined walks in the college yard. My attention was drawn to a canvas-covered farm wagon—a mountain edition of the prairie schooner—passing in the street. Supposing it to be one of the innumerable apple wagons from the near-by mountains and thinking to purchase a choice Virginia Beauty or Gilliflower for a dessert, I passed through the gate and accosted the driver, a gaunt graybeard in homespun.

"No, Mister, I never fotch nary apple this trip," he replied to my inquiry. "I jist come to town to do some tradin' an' git news from the war."

"You have a son overseas?" I asked, divining it from something in the old man's tone.

"I *did* have, Mister," he said quietly. "But Lawyer Taylor give me this here paper this mornin' an' says my boy's named among the killed. Here's the paper—the Jedge he put a mark ferninst the name." And he handed me the folded paper.

I saw the name Judge Taylor had checked: "John Hilton, Dry Cove, Tennessee." Then I remembered.

"Oh! Then it was your wife and daughter-in-law who brought me the letter from the young Frenchwoman some months ago."

"Yes, sir, an' I reckon you're the linkster they talked about so much. They was shore proud the way ye holp 'em!"

"Well, my dear sir, I am sorry indeed to know of your great loss," I said, extending my hand.

"Much obleeged, Perfesser," the old man answered with dry eyes but with a choke in his voice. "Hit's a hard thing, sir, to raise a boy an' then him be tuck away off to some furrin country an' killed when nuther you ner him didn't have nary thing to do with the trouble, ner even know rightly what hit was all about. But, sir, the wust of hit fer me is in goin' home an' tellin' the ol' woman an' the boy's woman. She's a-nussin' a babe now, that's named fer hit's daddy. Hit's a sorry time, sir!"

"It is indeed, my friend, and I shall ask you to express to your wife and your son's wife my sympathy in this great sorrow that falls so heavily upon mothers and wives in these troubled times."

"That's a good, kind word, Mister, an' hit'll do the women-folks a heap o' good. They keep a-tellin' about ye an' sayin' how clever ye was to 'em."

The canvas-covered wagon rumbled on. The dry eyes of the old man were turned toward the blue hills where that night two mothers should pour down their little rivulet of tears to swell the mighty flood of the world's grief. With a pang there came to me again the thought of that telltale letter. The old mother of a fallen soldier and the young mother of a fatherless babe would weep that night, but their tears would be soft and cleansing, leaving no scars. Any day, though, a chance stranger might break the fragile phial I had sealed with kindly deception, and its acrid poison would flow into the freshly opened wounds to scald and sear past all healing.

MANY months passed; there were signs of spring again. On a crisp Saturday morning I had donned tramping togs, slung knapsack and camera across my shoulders, and fared forth for a day in the hills. In three hours I was in the shadows of the Cherokee. The state highway from the city had long since given place to a fairly good "dirt road," and this in turn had narrowed and roughened into a rocky wagon way that followed along, across, and through a tumbling stream between steep wooded ridges. Here and there the mountain walls parted far enough to frame in a bit of meadow with a cabin and a stable nestling against the foot of the ridge. Occasional flashes of azalea startled the eye from the mountain-sides. Furry-looking scrub cattle huddled about weathered haystacks.

Then the road led upward more sharply, with innumerable windings, until it crossed the top of the main ridge in a sunny gap. Here by a tiny spring I stopped for an early lunch. Behind and below me the valley lay in the hazy sunlight. Short stretches of the roadway I had followed showed as yellow streaks against the green forest background.

In the distance I descried a white object moving almost imperceptibly along one of these yellow streaks. I soon made it out as a mountaineer's white-topped wagon, coming up toward the gap. By the time I had eaten my sandwiches and drunk my coffee the rumble of wheels on the rocks could be heard. I sat and waited until the wagon pulled up to the spring.

It took me some moments to make sure I had seen the white-haired teamster before, but he recognized me instantly. Mountaineers never forget a stranger. He greeted me in the old emotionless tone I now recalled distinctly.

I had advanced to the wagon and was about to make some jocular remark about his apparently heavy load, when a shock of realization came to me. Protruding from the open end-gate of the short wagon, beneath the canvas top, was the end of a long box draped with an American flag.

"Oh, I see," I gasped. "Your son, back from France!"

"Yes, Mister. I'm a-buryin' him tomorrer."

I grasped the old man's hand and he gripped mine in a way that meant understanding.

"How much farther do you go?" I asked.

"Hit's jist a little ways down around that next p'int. Won't ye go home with me? The ol' woman an' the gal would be proud to see ye, sir."

Without a word I climbed up and sat beside him.

As we neared the journey's end I could see that my aged companion was becoming ill at ease; his stolid manner grew less confident. It was plain that he dreaded the moment of arrival.

"Ye know how women-folks is, sir," he said as if to fortify me as well as himself against the trying scene he anticipated. "They'll be a right smart of a crowd thar, I reckon. The ol' woman's nephew, a young feller that's 'tendin' college over at Maryville, is thar. He's a smart lad an' they say he gits his sheepskin nex' spring."

THE women met us at the gate with no outcry or demonstration, to the old man's great relief. They wiped a few tears away with the corners of their aprons as the neighbor men removed the casket from the box, laid the flag upon it, and carried it into the house. Both women greeted me cordially, but betrayed not the least surprise at my unexpected presence. A score of neighbors sat quietly within on chairs, benches or beds. The black metallic casket was placed upon two chairs in the center of the room. There was no service, no prayer, no preacher. The family and friends had come to sit awhile with the dead.

The young kinsman from the college, a trim-looking youth, sat near the head of the bier. Virgie's baby, little John, struggled down from his mother's lap and toddled on sturdy but uncertain legs about the room. The grandmother quietly dominated the little group, welcoming newcomers, closing doors, piling fresh logs on the open fire.

When all were seated she went to the old "press" in the corner of the room, opened its calico-curtained door, and drew from a hidden recess a sadly worn tinted envelope.

"Frien's an' neighbors," she began in a voice that was calm and steady, "some of you-uns has heard about the nice letter we got from a Frinch lady whilst John was on yan side. The Perfesser that's with us today read hit to me an' Virgie an' hit was as purty talkin' as ever I heard. We've got my sister's boy here from college, which he's l'arnt to read them furrin tongues right

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offen the book, an' I'm goin' to ax him to take an' read this letter to you-uns. Hit makes us proud of the way John helt hisself up amongst the best of 'em when he got over yander."

A cold sweat broke out on my forehead and a sickening horror seized me. My worst fears had been realized and the tragic undeceiving was to come on this day of days, the home-coming of the hero son, now to be turned into a day of confusion and humiliation. I tried to think of something—anything—to prevent the awful thing that was going to happen. I conceived a wild, impossible plan to interrupt, to make some excuse to call the college boy aside, make a hurried explanation, and coach him for the translation. But it was too late.

The grandmother started to cross the room to place the letter in the young man's hands. Little John clung to her skirts and whimpered to be taken up. A new thought came to her.

"Here, honey," she said gently, "you take this here letter over yander an' give hit to yer Cousin Davy. That's Granny's leetle man, bless his heart!"

The guests smiled soberly as the baby, clutching the letter in his hand, began his wabbly journey across the room. In his childish mind he realized that he had an important mission to perform, but he wasn't exactly sure what was expected of him. Midway of his course he stopped, turned back and looked at his grandmother, who shook her gray head in encouragement. Then a light of understanding shone in his baby eyes. He took two quick steps forward and tossed the letter upon the blazing logs in the great stone fireplace!

With a cry of dismay the grandmother started toward the fire, but by the time her stiff joints could respond and her rheumatic hands could seize the tongs, there was left only the scorched corner of the last page. It bore the French girl's name—Héloïse Michaud.

I was on my feet in an instant. My brain was working now—working as if by inspiration.

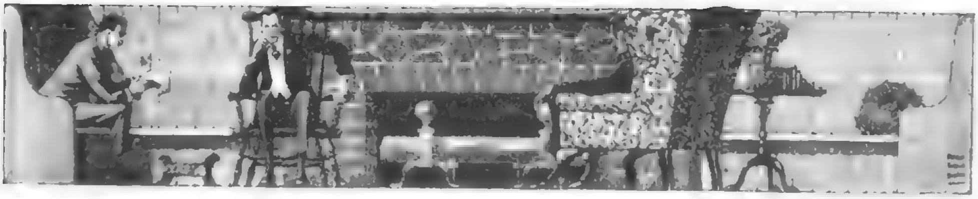
"My dear friends," I said, "you are all distressed, of course, over what has just happened to the letter. Fortunately I can recall practically every word of it, and I am going to write it all again in French, just as I read it to my two friends more than a year ago. I know they will wish to keep it, and that this little boy, when he grows to manhood, will treasure it as a memorial of his brave young father who gave his life for a great cause." . . .

A vision of the grateful, tear-shiny faces of an old woman and a young widow went with me down the rough homeward road that afternoon. I don't know what the Recording Angel put down in the Big Books, but I do know I was a very unrepentant and very happy linkster!

# Lakeside and Mountaintop

## By Amelia Josephine Burr

CLOUDS are about the slopes of Nantai-Zan.
The solemn beauty of the upper snow
None sees except the sun.
Along Chuzenji shore the maples flame
Crimson and gold for all the world, until
Their little day is done.
So loves too light for hiding may possess
Their short and shining hour my eyes, my hand,
Even my lips—and go.
But you are on the summit of my heart
Throned in a hidden purity and peace
That only God can know.



# Everybody's Chimney Corner

## *Where Reader, Author and Editor Gather to Talk Things Over*

IT IS the belief of Meade Minnigerode ("The Pop-Eyed Cow," page 57) that stories of the war period, if they deal with the ludicrous, entertaining features resulting from little-known jobs—the side-shows outside the main tent—will interest the most apathetic reader. And EVERYBODY'S agrees with him if the stories are all as refreshing as "The Pop-Eyed Cow." Of his experiences in France, Mr. Minnigerode says:

> At one time it was my privilege to carry on my person information concerning daily movements of transports across the Atlantic. If I had enjoyed the privilege much longer than I did, I should have developed an extra pair of eyes in the back of my head, especially after seeing the Chief of Staff of the French Army walk into the lobby of a certain Paris hotel for a conference, followed by three non-commissioned officers, all carrying steel boxes *chained* to their waists and wrists.
>
> At another period I found myself spending five nights out of seven, for weeks at a time, in express trains, armed with permanent passes to military bases whose very existence was supposed to be a dark secret. Again, because I spoke French fluently, I found myself hiring housekeepers and cooks and fitting up hotels for use as convalescent homes. It was during an inspection of one of these that I witnessed some of the events described in "The Pop-Eyed Cow."

LEE DICKSON comes to EVERYBODY'S with a story of unusual merit ("Fifty Miles from Nowhere," page 36) and to the Chimney Corner with the hesitancy of a stranger finding a welcome place in a chatty get-together. He says:

> We all love to talk about ourselves. We get a sensuous thrill from it. Generally (though Heaven save me from marital platitudes!) my wife says, "Now, dear, there are *other* people, you know," and then we talk about her or the "other people." Not nearly so interesting, that. Just now she is backing the car into the street, via the hedge and two flower-beds, and doesn't know what I'm up to; so I continue to splash little *I*'s and *me*'s gloriously in the sunshine of publicity.
>
> *I*—oh, this is great!—*I* was born in Philadelphia, 1896, and claim the distinction of not poking fun at that incident. My adolescence there was all that I wanted my son's not to be. It was followed by twenty-six months in the Navy (World War) as "gob" and, finally, officer of the Line, afloat. I did not like the Navy; it took up my evenings. Then, after my discharge from the Navy, I wrote, desultorily, lyrics for musical shows and what are known as "independent numbers." My hobbies are opera, golf and dogs.

STILL in his thirties, Francis Brett Young ("Sea Horses," page 9) is the son of a country doctor, and himself a doctor. The profession was not his first choice.

> It was one [he writes] against which I rebelled, but I know now there is nothing in the world which so fits a man of letters to wrestle with the mind of man as an intimate acquaintance with the body. A doctor sees the spring of curious motives, he shares strange secrets. There is no other education in humanity to compare with the doctor's life.

This education he rounded out by seeing the world as a ship's surgeon; he touched at all the main ports of the East, from Egypt to Japan and Korea, and added to that a notable record in the R. A. M. C. serving in Africa.

"Sea Horses" contains some of that first-hand experience garnered in the far corners of the globe.

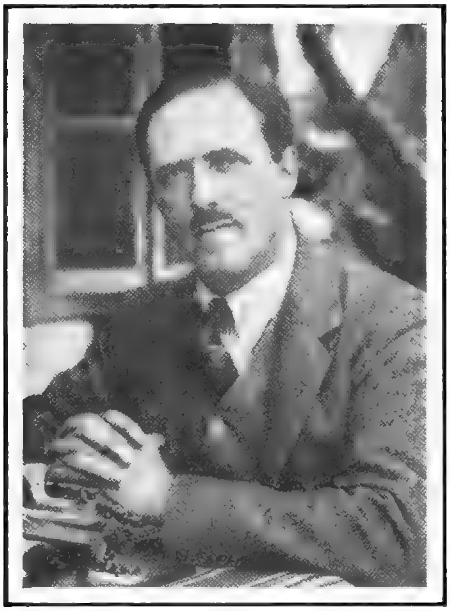
OF STACY AUMONIER ("Dark Red Roses," page 29) a friend says:

> Stacy Aumonier might have been a painter. He might have been an actor. He has been both, professionally, and is still both as an amateur. But by putting pen to paper he settled his destiny, though

Hodge Mathes pictures the people of our southern mountains in a memorable story.

W. Lee Dickson ("Fifty Miles from Nowhere") writes a delightfully chatty letter to you.

Stacy Aumonier's pronounced success as a writer is maintained by "Dark Red Roses."

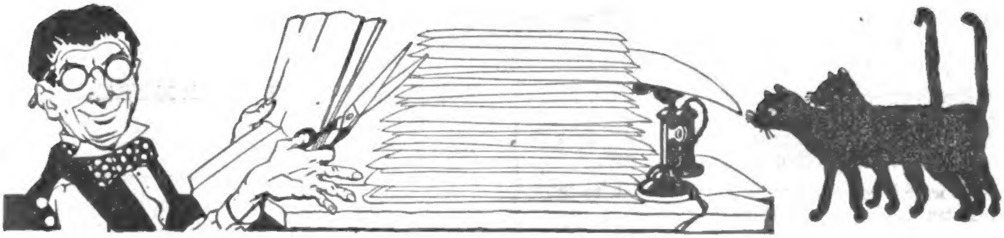


Major Francis Brett Young, distinguished as a novelist and as a surgeon, author of the strong new serial "The Sea Horses" (page 9).

he did not guess it at the time. Oddly enough, nobody except his wife *knows* where Stacy Aumonier writes. It is a secret he declines to divulge. Somewhere, "in a slum," as he explains vaguely, he rents a room in which he can be undisturbed, either by the telephone or his wife's practising, or by the greatest disturbance of all—if the most tempting—namely, his chubby little two-year-old son.

TUCKED away in a corner of the southern mountains, entirely isolated from the outside world, dwells a class of mountaineers who are directly descended from the adventurous pioneers that came to this country from England centuries ago. It is because of their isolation that they have preserved the language and customs of Elizabethan days and remain a sturdy, independent group of unmodernized Americans. In this little vignette, "The Linkster" (page 176), Hodge Mathes has sympathetically caught the spirit that predominated when the men of the Kentucky hills came down to the lowlands and enlisted in the army and navy in 1916—a common cause suddenly abolishing their isolation. Of himself Mr. Mathes says:

> After a wild and reckless youth spent in teaching Greek in two Presbyterian colleges, I'm now a reformed linguist holding down the chair of rural education in a state normal school. I'm still shockingly dissipated, though. I smoke a cigar every Friday at the Optimist Club luncheon, say "Ding bust it!" when in a towering rage, and guzzle bootleg buttermilk habitually.
>
> Worse yet, I periodically yield to an atavistic urge and wander about as a hobo, with colleagues and companions as rakish as myself. I've even consorted with preachers on such occasions and found their ecclesiastical vocabulary mighty handy when the tent leaked and the matches were wet.
>
> Within an hour's walk from the Normal campus I can lose myself in a sequestered cove where the hand loom is still in use and the old-time squirrel rifle still hangs on its peg above the cabin door. Adventure lurks around the next turn in the trail.
>
> But it's my folks who live in these hills, and in twenty years of tramping I've never had an unfriendly word or look from man or woman, child or dog. These homely tales of mine are but brief, random chapters from a story that has never been fully told—a story replete with comedy and tragedy, adventure and romance.



# Prose *and* Worse, *by* Gridley Adams

## DO YOU BELIEVE IN SIGNS?

Ad of Boston Store, Chicago: "*Smoked Fish. Strictly Fresh Caught.*"
President of Joy (Ill.) State Bank: "*W. V. Love.*"
Ad in Oklahoma paper: "*Hot Dish Mats. A Dollar Each According To Size.*"
In Canton, Ill.: "*Holdup Service Station.*"
On Wells St., Chicago: "*Sitt & Howell.*"
At Wichita Falls, Tex.: "*M. B. Oates, Agricultural Agent.*"
On upper half of window in W. 47th St., Chicago: "*John H. Jackson, Lawyer.*" On lower half of same window: "*Gas administrated. All work guaranteed.*"
On main doorway of Newark, Ohio, courthouse: "*No banana skins, peanut shells or tobacco spit allowed on these steps.*" (H. W. S.)

*(Kankakee, Ill., Republican)*

FOR SALE—A YOUNG HORSE AND wagon, female sex. 470 S. Poplar.

**Runabout?**

---

*(Sign of Des Moines coal dealer)*

"Our Coal Is Crazy With The Heat."

**Nut size?**

---

*(Estherville, Ia., Enterprise)*

WANTED—ONE LADY IN ESTHERVILLE and one lady in Ringsted. Steady.

**What! Is that kind getting so few you have to advertise for 'em?**

---

*(Married in Guelph, Ont.)*

Mr. Topp and Miss Coate.

**Buttonholed for life, as 'twere.**

---

*(Headline in Des Moines Register)*

FARMER DISAPPEARS: BELIEVED TO HAVE LEFT.

**Perhaps he just went away.**

---

*(From "Music Madness")*

Her eyes turned up to mine; and I shall never forget the expression in them—half fear, half desire, half gratitude, half love.

**And the other three-quarters pure bunk.**

---

*(New Orleans States)*

Jackson, Miss.—Advices from the A. and M. college are to the effect that John Borden, multi-millionaire, has presented that institute with Jackson Orion King, the international grand champion Duroc Jersey boar, valued at $32,000. He will head the college here, which is one of the finest in the country.

**Certainly oughta make a swill president.**

---

*(Ad in Chicago Tribune)*

Shopping in the Earlier Morning Hours, while Aisles are Uncrowded and Salespeople Fresh.

**As usual.**

---

*(Ad in Chicago Tribune)*

BIRD'S EYE TWIN BEDS, DRESSER, chairs, desk, Book of Knowledge: cheap. 214 E. 46th St.

**Complete outfit.**

---

*(Roann, Ind., Clarion)*

FOR SALE—5 YR OLD JERSEY COW GIVing good flow of milk and bred. E. E. MULL.

**Now if I could only find a lump of sugar!**

---

*(Waupun, Wis., News)*

All the singers of the town, whether in the choirs or not, are asked to *set* on the stage to help in the carol singing. (N. C. M.)

**Cut-Cut-Cut-c'daw-cut.**

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*(Fairbury, Ill., Local Record)*

Below is given a list of the places where the high-school teachers expect to spend Christmas.

Mr. Hutchens, Miss Statford and Miss Miche will remain at their respective homes in this city.

**And in this way they will save enough to take the same Christmas vacation next year.**

---

*(British Agricultural Market Report)*

Imported frozen and chilled beef sell at unaltered prices, while frozen mutton is very firm.

**Now I know why the prices are so stiff.**

---

*(Auto man's slogan in Keokuk, Iowa)*

"Don't Go Elsewhere To Be Robbed; Come Here."

**Just one darned garage bill after another.**

---

*(Ad of a cafeteria in Chicago)*

"Where You Look Before You Eat."

(MISS M. A. R.)

**Lucky I did, too.**

---

*(Ad in Mattoon, Ia., News)*

FRESH flowers, vegetables and eggs for all occasions. Telephone ——.

**And the baseball season is just over.**

---

*(Marme, Iowa, Record)*

Music and playlets will be given, and lunch will be served. If the weather is hot, a cold lunch. If the weather is cold, hot lunch. If neither hot nor cold, both cold and hot lunch. (J. P. N.)

**The chances are we'll get *something* to eat, anyway.**

---

*(Sign in Antioch, Ill.)*

Antioch Hotel: Meals Served.

**There is some talk of their adding a restaurant.**

---

*(South Haven, Mich., Tribune)*

The child was taken to Dr. Becker; and, although it is a serious case, he hopes the eye will come out all right.

**Some optimist.**

---

*(Chicago Daily News)*

BY LAUNDRESS—COLORED DAYS. REFS. Phone Atlantic 1290.

**Meaning Blue Mondays?**

---

*(Sign on Belmont Trust and Savings Bank, Chicago)*

"ENLARGING QUARTERS."

**Boy, run over there and see what they can do with this dollar bill.**

---

*(Champaign, Ill., News-Gazette)*

BOYS WITH WHEELS OVER 16 YEARS OLD. Apply Western Union.

**Now I *know!***

---

*(Chicago Engineering and Contracting)*

There are few vocations which offer more opportunities for expansion than that of explosive contractor.

**Migawd, Marcelle!**

---

*(Orden, Ohio, Times)*

WANTED—Woman for fancy pressing. Write ——.

**Aha! *There's* keen discrimination for you.**

---

*(Hartley, Iowa, Sentinel)*

The Sentinel is in receipt of a renewal of the subscription of our former townsman, Ben Boldt, who is now agent at Presho, S. D.

**Boy, take a letter to Presho, and see what's become of our old friend, Swedalice.**

---

*(Chicago Tribune)*

Mr. and Mrs. Charles T. Eddy of Oak Park will be married on next Thursday to Charles Silverblatt of Blytheville, Ark.

**Pretty soft for the Eddys.**

---

*(Mildred Spain's Hollywood notes in Chicago Tribune)*

The writers club entertained a number of stars at Christmas dinner. Miss Ferguson was clad in a brown hat in cream trimmed with a bow of garden glories.

**Well, 'salrite, if they didn't skimp on the amount of ribbon used.**

---

*(Chicago Tribune)*

UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

To act as night watchmen, 6 hrs daily; sleeping accommodations provided if desired. Apply Director, Field Museum.

**Evidently, they know those birds.**

---

*(Iron Mountain News)*

WANTED—WOMAN OR GIRL FOR PRESSing. Short hours. Good wages. Experience considered.

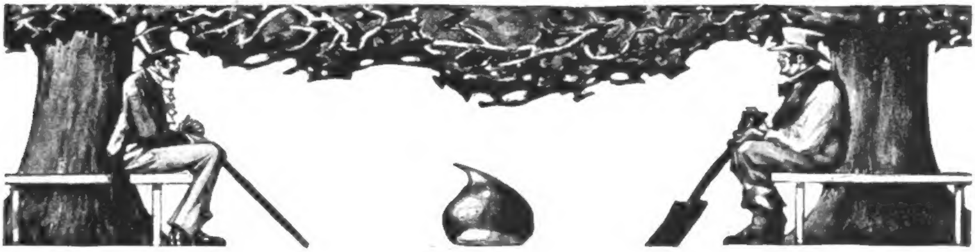
**And the hammock season so far gone, too.**

---

*(Little Rock Gazette)*

"SOULS BURNING IN HELL" will be the subject of J. O. Johnston, pastor of the People's Baptist church, Sunday night. Every unsaved man and woman should hear this sermon. "Tell Mother I'll Be There" will be given as a quartet by four young ladies.—Adv.

**Where they seem perfectly willing to brag about it.**



# Everybody's Chestnut Tree

*EDITOR'S NOTE: Though the sign is the Chestnut Tree, no story is barred by its youth. We will gladly pay for available ones. Address all manuscripts to "The Chestnut Tree," enclosing stamped addressed envelope.*

IT WAS at a summer camp and Caroline was nowhere to be seen for more than an hour. When she came back she told her mother she had been for a walk with her best friend. Alarmed, the mother said: "Never do so again. You little girls must not go to the woods alone."

Caroline answered: "But we were not alone, Muvver. Evelyn was wis me, and I was wis Evelyn."

"MY HUSBAND," said Helen, "is forty today. You'd never believe that there is actually ten years' difference in our ages."

"Why, no!" said Maude. "I'm sure you look every bit as young as he does."

"HOW'S the boy gettin' on at college?"

"Fine," answered Farmer Brown. "He knows more'n some of them there professors now, only they're kind o' techy and he dasn't let on."

FRIEND: What a horrible noise comes from that radio set!

RADIO FAN: Well, I guess you would make just as bad a noise if you were coming out of ether.

A LITTLE country girl went shopping in the city with her mother and saw an elevator for the first time.

"How did you like it?" asked the father on her return.

"Why, it was so funny, papa!" answered the child. "We went into a little house and the upstairs came down."

"SO THIS fine little baby is a girl?" beamed the rector as he walked round the baby show.

The proud father assented.

"And this other one—is it of the contrary sex?"

His wife's eye was on him, but with no thought of the wrath to come he replied blithely:

"Yes, sir. She's a girl, too."

A YOUNG Frenchwoman came to this country as the bride of an American soldier. On a walking tour with her sister-in-law, a purist, she exclaimed, "Oh, I am all of a sweat!"

"My dear!" exclaimed the sister-in-law. "Never use that word again. Horses sweat; men perspire; ladies merely glow."

DOCTOR: Well, John, how are you?

JOHN: I be better than I was, sir, but I hain't as well as I was before I was as bad as I be now.

BERT: And you girls never quarrel?

GERT: My, no! We live in an apartment where there isn't even room for an argument.

A DARKY called at a hospital the other day and said: "I come to see how mah friend Joe Johnson am getting along."

"Why, he's getting along fine!" the nurse answered. "He's convalescing now."

"Well," said the darky, "I'll jest set down and wait till he's through."

CELESTE of the city was watching her grandmother milk a cow with a calf. When the milking was finished she asked, "Aren't you going to milk the calf?"

"No, dear," answered the grandmother.

"Why not? 'Cause it hasn't any milk bottles?"

IT MUST have been an Irish preacher who was vainly endeavoring to impress his congregation with the necessity of more earnest attention to his pearls of thought. He said:

"Trying to impart knowledge to some folks is like pouring water on a duck's back; it goes in one ear and out the other."

"YOUR Honor," said Pat to the judge, "it's a divorce I'll be afther gettin' from me wife Norah. She talks all night and she talks all day."

"Why, Pat, what does she talk about?"

"Begorra, she don't say."

THE governing board of the church was conferring upon the election of a new pastor, and the principal bone of contention was the salary. The chairman, who had been known to lapse into profanity under the stress of great excitement, at last became thoroughly exasperated. He rapped thunderously upon the table.

"Stop this quibbling over the salary of the minister," he exclaimed. "For God's sake let's pay enough to get a good one!"

"G-GOOD heavens, Alfred! This second-hand car is awful!"

"Y-yes, and the worst of it is, the dealer said it would last for years!"

A FARMER boy had spent a sultry half-hour, hauling and driving a new calf toward the barn. A steer dashed by, headed for the pasture, and the calf followed.

"Go to thunder, you darn fool!" muttered the boy. "You'll know the difference when supper time comes."

LITTLE May had eaten very heartily and at the close of the meal her mother noticed that the child was unusually quiet.

"Don't you feel well, dear?" she asked anxiously.

"Oh, yes, I feel well enough," answered May; "but, mamma, my dress is so tight."

IN MOVING and settling down, the Dodge family had subsisted on short rations, and one morning Mrs. Dodge found herself facing an unknown deficit.

"Mary," she said to the maid of all work, "what is there in the storeroom?"

"Every blessed thing is given out but the tea an' coffee," Mary informed her, "an' sure they will, if they last long enough."

AN OREGON man was trying to sell a horse. The animal was broken-winded but sleek. The owner trotted him around for inspection and bringing him back to the prospect he stroked the horse's back and remarked, "Hasn't he a lovely coat?"

The prospect removed his pipe and said, as he looked at the heaving flanks of the animal: "Yeah, his coat's all right, but I don't like his pants."

BYSTANDER: Did you get the number of the car that knocked you down, madam?

Victim: No, but the hussy that was driving it wore a three-piece tweed suit, lined with Canton crêpe, and she had on a periwinkle hat, trimmed with artificial cherries.

"I HEAR the new doctor is not doing well."

"To tell the truth he takes life too easily."

"Oh, they all do."

A GEORGIA "cracker" tells this story on his own people. He says a northern man who settled in Georgia was visited by a friend who asked him how he liked the place and the people.

"Oh, all right," replied the man.

"Now tell me," asked the friend, "what is a Georgia cracker? How can you tell him from another person?"

"Well," replied the northern settler, "you see out in that field a black object?"

"Yes," said the friend.

"Now," said the man, "that may be either a Georgia cracker or a stump. Watch it for half an hour, and if it moves, why, it's a stump."

COHEN: Say, Goldstein, vat you know, that boy, Abie Epstein, has learned three languages, German, French and Spanish, in nine months.

Goldstein: Oh, vell, I always said he was quick mit his hands.